

June 15, 2026

The Honorable Sherron Ashworth  
Acting Assistant Chief Immigration Judge  
Baton Rouge Immigration Court  
451 Florida Street  
Suite 500  
Baton Rouge, LA 70801  
By Hand Delivery

**Re: Request for Public Access to Judicial Proceedings in the Baton Rouge Immigration Court**

Dear Acting Assistant Chief Judge Ashworth:

We write today to respectfully request this court allow public access to all Baton Rouge Immigration Court proceedings as allowed by policy and law. Enclosed you will find a complaint from various individuals, and on behalf of Mision Migrante, who have been denied access to immigration proceedings at the Baton Rouge Immigration Court. We believe transparency and accountability are critical in this process and believe hearings must remain open to the public, including interested community members, legal observers, and members of the press. The complaint will provide specific instances and examples of the denial of public right of access to the court, but we hope to ensure all court decisions related to access comply with the First Amendment, federal law, and court policies.

With the recent increase in immigration enforcement across the country and specifically in Louisiana, in addition to the continued high concentration of individuals in immigration detention in Louisiana, the public has become increasingly aware of and interested in ensuring these proceedings are open, transparent, and accountable to the public in order to protect due process. The decisions made by this court to limit public access violate the court's stated policies.<sup>1</sup> Further, when a court determines that public access should be limited, it must be narrowly tailored to a compelling government interest.<sup>2</sup> As the complaints outline, the frequency and overly broad exclusion of members of the public, including those specifically invited by individuals with a pending hearing, does not comport with the fair understanding of "narrowly tailored" and without explanation of any compelling government interest when wholesale denial of access to these proceedings violates this court's own policies.

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<sup>1</sup> "Observing Immigration Court Proceedings," Fact Sheet Office of Policy, February 2026, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/media/1416861/dl?inline>; "Baton Rouge Immigration Court, Observing Immigration Court Proceedings" <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/baton-rouge-immigration-court#observing>, last accessed: June 5, 2026.

<sup>2</sup> *Globe Newspaper Co. v. Superior Ct. for Norfolk Cnty.*, 457 U.S. 596, 606–07 (1982) (describing the importance of press and public access to courts).



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Sarah Whittington  
*Advocacy Director*

While we understand there are specific instances whereby the court may restrict access to the public,<sup>3</sup> these complaints show a pattern and practice of prohibiting access as the rule, not the exception as intended by law. The right of the public and press to access the courts and observe proceedings is a cornerstone of the First Amendment.<sup>4</sup> It is also a longstanding principle and repeatedly upheld by the courts as necessary to ensure fair due process in order to uphold our democratic ideals.<sup>5</sup> Immigration court hearings, including master, bond, and merits hearings should presumptively be open to the public for the sake of transparency.

Based on the evidence in the attached complaints, we ask this court to review these concerns and take immediate steps to ensure public and media access is allowed to observe, in person, all eligible immigrations hearings. Should there be any extenuating circumstances within the court that prevent the physical presence of in-person observation of court proceedings (i.e. a significant number of interested parties), we request the court grant the necessary and reasonable accommodations of telephonic or Webex access to the hearings. When a hearing must be closed based on the limited exceptions allowed by law, we request that members of the public denied access are provided with the written reasons for the closure of the hearing to ensure that these closures meet the necessary requirements and the restrictions are narrowly tailored to meet a compelling government interest.

Sincerely,



Sarah Whittington  
Advocacy Director, ACLU of Louisiana



William Quigley, Counsel for Mison Migrante

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<sup>3</sup> See Department of Justice, *Immigration Court Practice Manual, Chapter 4.9 – Public Access*, <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/reference-materials/ic/chapter-4/9> (citing to 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.27, 1003.31(d), 1003.46, 1208.6, 1240.10(b), 1240.11(c)(3)(i)).

<sup>4</sup> *Richmond Newspapers, Inc. v. Virginia*, 448 U.S. 555, 599 (1980) (Stewart, J., concurring) (describing the traditional legal right of the press and public to access civil and criminal courts).

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., *Id.* 448 U.S. at 566-79 (discussing the history and tradition of criminal and civil court proceedings being open to the public); *Globe Newspaper Co.* 457 U.S. at 606.



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Sarah Whittington  
Advocacy Director

## COMPLAINT OF ILLEGAL DENIAL OF PUBLIC ACCESS TO BATON ROUGE IMMIGRATION COURT

June 15, 2026

This is a complaint on behalf of volunteers affiliated with Mision Migrante who have tried for months to observe public proceedings at Baton Rouge Immigration Court. These volunteers have been repeatedly and illegally denied public access to observe proceedings of the Baton Rouge Immigration Court.

This complaint was drafted on behalf of Mision Migrante by William Quigley, Emeritus Professor of Law, Fr. Louis J. Twomey Scholar at the Jesuit Social Research Institute, Loyola University New Orleans, 7214 St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70118.

[Quigley77@gmail.com](mailto:Quigley77@gmail.com)

This complaint is submitted to:

Acting Assistant Chief Immigration Judge Sherron Ashworth,

By hand delivery to:

Baton Rouge Immigration Court,

451 Florida Street, Suite 500, Baton Rouge, LA 70801.

Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20530-0001

Department of Justice Acting Inspector General William M. Blier

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of the Inspector General

950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, D.C. 20530

Darren K. Margolin Director

Executive Office of Immigration Review

5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 2500

Falls Church, VA 22041

[PAO.EOIR@usdoj.gov](mailto:PAO.EOIR@usdoj.gov)

[judicial.conduct@usdoj.gov](mailto:judicial.conduct@usdoj.gov)

Copies by personal delivery to the following

Baton Rouge Immigration Court Administrator Bryan Kessler  
Baton Rouge Immigration Court Judge Jaclyn C. Chapman  
Baton Rouge Immigration Court Judge Carey Holliday  
Baton Rouge Immigration Court Judge Scott Laragy  
Baton Rouge Immigration Court Judge Patrick E. Moore  
Baton Rouge Immigration Court Judge Cassie Thogersen  
Baton Rouge Immigration Court Judge Romaine White

US Senator John Kennedy 7932 Wrenwood Blvd., Suite A & B, Baton Rouge, LA 70809  
US Senator Bill Cassidy 450 Laurel St., Suite 1400, Baton Rouge, LA 70801  
US Congress Cleo Fields 700 North 10th Street, Fourth Floor, Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
US Congress Troy Carter 650 Poydras Street, Suite 2525, New Orleans, LA 70130

## **SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT**

Mision Migrante asks the Baton Rouge Immigration Court be immediately open to the public in accordance with law, both in person and virtually via the U.S. Department of Justice internet Webex.<sup>1</sup> Mision Migrante also requests a federal investigation into continued illegal denial of public access at the Baton Rouge Immigration Courts.

Members of the public have a legal right to access to immigration court proceedings. Public access is legally required by U.S. law in the First Amendment, the Federal Code of Regulations,<sup>2</sup> the published policies and practices of the U.S. Department of Justice,<sup>3</sup> and the published policies and practices of the Executive Office for Immigration Review. Indeed, even the website of the Baton Rouge Immigration Court itself announces “Immigration court hearings are open to the public, with limited exceptions, as specified in law.”<sup>4</sup> There are limited exceptions for cases involving allegations of abuse of spouses or children or to protect the public interest. In this complaint, no such exceptions were ever raised as justifications for blocking access to the public.

In October 2025 the U.S. Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review opened a new immigration court in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/find-immigration-court-and-access-internet-based-hearings>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/chapter-V/subchapter-A/part-1003/subpart-C/section-1003.27>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/policy-manual-eoir/part-II/icpm/chapter-3-8>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/baton-rouge-immigration-court#observing>

<sup>5</sup> [www.justice.gov/eoir/media/1412651/dl?inline](https://www.justice.gov/eoir/media/1412651/dl?inline)

On Monday October 20, 2025, Rachel Taber and 4 other members of the public were refused entry to the Baton Rouge Immigration court. They were told the judge had closed the court to the public all day. When they advised that they had permission from one of the respondents, they were again told that the judge had closed all the proceedings to the court all day. A written complaint about this refusal to provide public access was filed with the Baton Rouge Immigration Court, the Attorney General of the United States, and the Director of the Executive Office of Immigration Review. (See ATTACHMENT A). The only response to the complaint was a December 17, 2025 letter from the DOJ Office of the Inspector General indicating that they had forwarded the complaint to the Executive Office for Immigration Review and were taking no further action. (See ATTACHMENT B). Nothing else was ever done to look into this complaint or remind the courts of their duties to follow the law.

Despite the lack of response to the written complaint, volunteer members of the public continued to go in person to the court to try to observe proceedings.

Volunteer members of the public have attempted to observe proceedings at the Baton Rouge Immigration Court dozens of times over the past several months. They have been consistently turned away and not allowed inside the court rooms. While a few times they were advised that overcrowding was the reason they were refused access, nearly all were given no reasons other than one of more of the immigration judges has closed all the proceedings to the public.

From November 2025 to May 2026, volunteer members of the public went to Baton Rouge Immigration Court to try to observe proceedings as allowed by law over 50 times.

From November 2025 to May 5, 2026, members of the public were allowed to observe Master Hearings 6 times, and were denied access to Master Hearings 7 times.

From November 2025 to May 21, 2026, one member of the public was allowed to observe an individual hearing, other members of the public were denied 52 times.

Details of these dozens of attempts to observe are set out in ATTACHMENT C.

Further, because of the continued illegal denials of public access to the Baton Rouge Immigration Courts, two individuals affiliated with Mision Migrante, Bonnie Byland and Nancy Grush, have joined as named plaintiffs in United States District Court for the District of Columbia, case 1:26-cv-00865-RC, Advocates for Human Rights et al v Todd Blanche, in his capacity as Acting Attorney General of the United States et al.<sup>6</sup> This case seeks to compel the

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<sup>6</sup> Amended Complaint, document 23, case 1:26-cv-00865-RC, filed 06/09/26

immigration courts to comply with the laws governing public and press access to U.S. Department of Justice immigration courts.

## **LEGAL BASIS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO IMMIGRATION COURTS**

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which protects freedom of speech and the press, supports the right of the public to all court proceedings. Indeed, the U.S. Federal Courts official [website](#) of the U.S. government states: “The public may visit a federal court to watch each step of the federal judicial process, with few exceptions. Access for All. Most courtroom proceedings are open to the public on a first come, first served basis. A person who wishes to observe a court in session may check their local federal court calendar online or at the courthouse and watch a proceeding in person.”<sup>7</sup>

Title 8 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 1003.27 requires that “All hearings, other than exclusion hearings, shall be open to the public” except in certain limited circumstances.<sup>8</sup>

On February 10, 2026 the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued an updated Policy Manual. This manual states “Hearings in removal proceedings are generally open to the public. However, special rules may apply in the following instances...”<sup>9</sup>

Also in February 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a Fact Sheet for Observing Immigration Court Hearings.<sup>10</sup> That fact sheet says: “Immigration court hearings are generally open to the public with limited exceptions, as specified by law.” And later: “Visitors are not required to check in with court personnel before entering a courtroom to observe, although the presiding Immigration Judge may ask all visitors to identify themselves at the start of the hearing.”

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the law and the facts set out in this complaint, the Attorney General, the Director of the Executive Office of Immigration Review, the Acting Assistant Chief Immigration

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.uscourts.gov/court-records/access-court-proceedings#:~:text=The%20public%20may%20visit%20a,when%20entering%20a%20federal%20courthouse.>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/chapter-V/subchapter-A/part-1003/subpart-C/section-1003.27>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/policy-manual-eoir/part-ii/icpm/chapter-3-8>

<sup>10</sup> [www.justice.gov/eoir/media/1416861/dl?inline](http://www.justice.gov/eoir/media/1416861/dl?inline)

Judge of the Baton Rouge Immigration courts and the Baton Rouge Immigration Court Administrator should immediately cease all illegal denial of public access to the courts.

With immigration enforcement surging across Louisiana, and the state continuing to hold one of the highest concentrations of immigration detainees in the country, public oversight of these proceedings has never been more urgent. Closing these courtrooms does not make the process more orderly. It makes it less accountable. Thousands of lives are at stake. Follow the law. Open the doors. Let the public in. Let the public see. Let the public hear.

### **ATTACHED DOCUMENTS**

ATTACHMENT A: October 20, 2025 ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT DENIAL ACCESS TO BATON ROUGE IMMIGRATION COURT

ATTACHMENT B: December 17, 2025 Letter from Office of Inspector General of the Department of Justice forwarding complaint to Executive Office for Immigration Review.

ATTACHMENT C: Details of Denial of Public Access to Baton Rouge Immigration Court from November 2025 to May 2026

ATTACHMENT D: 8 Code of Federal Regulations Section 1003.27 Public access to hearings

ATTACHMENT E: Chapter 3.8 - Public Access of February 2026 Immigration Court Practice Manual of Executive Office for Immigration Review

ATTACHMENT F: FACT SHEET on Observing Immigration Court Hearings issued by the U.S. Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review issued February 2026

**ATTACHMENT A:** October 20, 2025 ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT DENIAL ACCESS TO BATON ROUGE IMMIGRATION COURT

## ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT

October 20, 2025

Rachel Taber and Four Other Members of the Public

Versus

Unnamed Members of Baton Rouge Immigration

Court

To:

Attorney General Pamela Bondi  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001  
Submitted through the DOJ OIG [portal](#).

Department of Justice Acting Inspector General William M. Blier  
U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of the Inspector General  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20530  
Submitted through the DOJ OIG [portal](#).

Acting Director Sirce E. Owen  
Executive Office of Immigration Review  
5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 2500

Falls Church, VA 22041

[PAO.EOIR@usdoj.gov](mailto:PAO.EOIR@usdoj.gov)

Congressman Troy Carter

650 Poydras, Suite 2525

New Orleans, LA

Submitted through Congressional [portal](#)

We are contacting you to ask you to investigate the Baton Rouge Office of Immigration Hearings for its illegal practice of denying members of the public access to hearings. We ask that you examine and document their illegal practices and immediately order them to comply with the requirement of public access to all proceedings allowed by law.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which protects freedom of speech and the press, supports the right of the public to all court proceedings. Indeed, the U.S. Federal Courts official [website](#) of the U.S. government states: “The public may visit a federal court to watch each step of the federal judicial process, with few exceptions. Access for All. Most courtroom proceedings are open to the public on a first come, first served basis. A person who wishes to observe a court in session may check their local federal court calendar online or at the courthouse and watch a proceeding in person.”

You have jurisdiction to supervise and investigate these proceedings under the Executive Office for Immigration Review which is part of the Department of Justice. The primary mission of the Executive Office for Immigration Review is to adjudicate immigration cases by fairly, expeditiously, and uniformly interpreting and administering the Nation’s immigration laws. Under delegated authority from the Attorney General, EOIR conducts immigration court proceedings, appellate reviews, and administrative hearings.

On Monday October 20, 2025, Rachel Taber and 4 other members of the public were refused entry to the Baton Rouge Immigration court. They were told the judge had closed the court to the public all day. When they advised that they had permission from one of the respondents they were again told that the judge had closed all the proceedings to the court all day.

Despite numerous requests, the person who ordered them to leave the court refused to identify herself. The unnamed court official then said she was calling Federal Protective Services and Rachel Taber left the office.

Therefore, we ask that you investigate and compel the New Orleans Immigration Court to follow the Constitution, the Federal Courts, and the rules of the Department of Justice Immigration Court Practice Manual and immediately open up all proceedings to the public.

Thank you,

William P. Quigley  
Attorney for Rachel Taber and other members of the public  
7500 Dominican Street  
New Orleans, LA 70118  
504.710.3074  
[Quigley77@gmail.com](mailto:Quigley77@gmail.com)

## **APPENDIX ONE: NATIONAL IMMIGRATION CHAPTER 4.9**

On the National <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/reference-materials/ic/chapter-4/9>

### **IMMIGRATION COURT PRACTICE MANUAL**

## **Chapter 4 - Hearings Before the Immigration Judges**

### **4.9 - Public Access**

Share

#### **(a) General Public -**

**(1) Hearings** - Hearings in removal proceedings are generally open to the public. However, special rules apply in the following instances:

- Evidentiary hearings involving an application for asylum or withholding of removal (“restriction on removal”), or a claim brought under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, are open to the public unless the respondent expressly requests that the hearing be closed. In cases involving these applications or claims, the Immigration Judge inquires whether the respondent requests such closure.
- Hearings involving an abused alien child are closed to the public. Hearings involving an abused alien spouse are closed to the public unless the abused spouse agrees that the hearing and the Record of Proceedings will be open to the public.

- Proceedings are closed to the public if information may be considered which is subject to a protective order and was filed under seal.

See 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.27, 1003.31(d), 1003.46, 1208.6, 1240.10(b), 1240.11(c)(3)(i). Only parties, their practitioner(s) of record, employees of the Department of Justice, and persons authorized by the Immigration Judge may attend a closed hearing.

**(2) Immigration Judges authorized to close hearings** - The Immigration Judge may limit attendance or close a hearing to protect parties, witnesses, or the public interest, even if the hearing would normally be open to the public. See 8 C.F.R. § 1003.27(b).

**(3) Motions to close hearing** - For hearings not subject to the special rules in subsection (1), above, parties may make an oral or written motion asking that the Immigration Judge close the hearing. See 8 C.F.R. § 1003.27(b). The motion should set forth in detail the reason(s) for requesting that the hearing be closed. If in writing, the motion should include a cover page labeled "MOTION FOR CLOSED HEARING" and comply with the deadlines and requirements for filing. See [Chapter 3](#) (Filing with the Immigration Court), [Appendix E](#) (Cover Pages).

#### **(b) News Media -**

Representatives of the news media may attend hearings that are open to the public. The news media are subject to the general prohibition on electronic devices in the courtroom. See [Chapter 4.13](#) (Electronic Devices). The news media are strongly encouraged to notify the Communicative and Legislative Affairs Division and the court administrator before attending a hearing. See Appendix A (Directory).

#### **APPENDIX TWO: BATON ROUGE IMMIGRATION COURT WEBSITE**

On the Court website: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/baton-rouge-immigration-court#observing>

## **Observing Immigration Court Hearings**

Immigration court hearings are open to the public, with limited exceptions, as specified in law. You do not need to notify the immigration court in advance of your visit. You are, however, encouraged to contact EOIR's Office of Policy at [PAO.EOIR@usdoj.gov](mailto:PAO.EOIR@usdoj.gov) to coordinate your visit. Note, the use of cameras and recording devices in courtrooms or

other EOIR spaces is prohibited. For additional information about court observations, please review EOIR's [Observing Immigration Court Hearings Fact Sheet](#)

**ATTACHMENT B:** December 17, 2025 Letter from Office of Inspector General of the Department of Justice forwarding complaint to Executive Office for Immigration Review.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE | OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20530-0001

December 17, 2025

William Quigley  
Quigley77@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Quigley:

Thank you for your recent correspondence received on November 17, 2025. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of the Inspector General, investigates allegations of misconduct by employees and contractors of DOJ, as well as waste, fraud and abuse affecting DOJ programs and operations. After reviewing your complaint, we have determined that the matters that you raised are more appropriate for review by another other DOJ office. Therefore, we have forwarded your correspondence to:

U.S. Department of Justice  
Executive Office for Immigration Review  
Director  
5107 Leesburg Pike, Suite 2000  
Falls Church, VA 22041

Please direct any further correspondence regarding this matter to this office. Of course, if you have information that involves other allegations or issues regarding DOJ employees, contractors, programs or operations, please feel free to submit that information to us.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to review your concerns.

Sincerely,

Office of the Inspector General  
Investigations Division

## **ATTACHMENT C: Details of Denial of Public Access to Baton Rouge Immigration Court from November 2025 to May 17, 2026, last revised 2026.6.2**

### **Public Access of Baton Rouge Immigration Court - Dates of Attempts to Observe and Results**

Information collected from volunteer members of the public in coordination with Mision Migrante.

This document written by Bill Quigley, Emeritus Professor of Loyola Law  
[quigley77@gmail.com](mailto:quigley77@gmail.com)

#### **SUMMARY**

From November 2025 to May 17, 2026, members of the public went to Baton Rouge Immigration Court to try to observe as allowed by law over 50 times.

From November 2025 to May 17, 2026, members of the public were allowed to observe Master Hearings 7 times, and were denied access dozens of times.

From November 2025 to May 17, 2026, 1 member of the public was allowed to observe an individual hearing, other members of the public were denied over 50 times.

#### **CHRONOLOGY – MOST RECENT LISTED FIRST**

5.27.26 BB Allowed into Master Calendar Hrng. Judge recognized h.

5.20.26 BB Denied. arrived today at 12:55 and was rejected for the 4 individual calendar hearings scheduled for 1:00.

5.18.2026 NG Denied. Guard C. Hughes told me that we will “never” be allowed in any individual hearing - even if the attorney & the respondent ask that we be present.

5.15.26 HD Denied entry to master hearings, said it was due to overcrowding.

5.13.26 HD not allowed in to master hearings because of overcrowding. Guard said sometimes the hearings were so overcrowded that family members could not get into the courtroom.

5.11.26 MP attended 1 hrng with Judge Moore. DOJ atty had a form for def atty to agree to presence of public – but only produced at the conclusion of the hearing. Later ct personnel advised that senior judges advised against making public access a regular thing.

5.11.26 NG denied.

5.7.26 BB Denied from 2 individual hearings. Master hearings access also were denied because it was going to be too crowded. One individual hearing and that was denied too of course.

5.7.26 MP denied entry to Judge Moore court. Allowed in Judge Holliday court.

5.7.26 BB denied access. I arrived at 8:20 AM and noticed several pages to the docket. Almost all dockets were for the afternoon. There were 2 Individual Calendar hearings set for 8:30 in the court of Judge Romain White. I inquired about the docket and the female security guard said, "They are not allowing yall in to any of the individuals." I asked, "Does that mean I can't go in to any hearings this morning?" She said that was correct.

5.6.26 BB denied entry to individual hearings. Several pages of docket. We arrived as a group of observers at about 12:55. There were several pages of dockets. It seemed that most of the afternoon hearings were Master Calendars and we were not allowed in. C. Hughes stated that the dockets were long and it would be too crowded to have room for observers. He did not leave the area to go ask, but seemed prepared to tell us that we would not be admitted. Despite the docket being full, there were only 4-5 respondents in the area. NG also denied.

5.6.26 BB Denied. Six of us requested admission to the Master Calendar Hearings ("MCH"), but C. Hughes said that Judge Romaine White & Patrick Moore closed their courts to outsiders because there wasn't enough room. Both judges were handling the caseload of Judge Cassie Thogerson, who was not able to hold court.

5.6.26 MP Denied. I requested admittance to observe master calendar hearings and was denied entry. NG also denied.

5.6.26 DB Denied. Arrived to observe either Master or Individual 1:00 hearings. Judges Holiday, White, and Moore were present and Thogersen was absent. Per C. Hughes we are not allowed to observe any Individual Hearing. He also said that we would normally be allowed to observe a Master Calendar Hearing but since the judges had split the docket to cover for the absent judge we would not be allowed in due to space constraints.

4.13.26 JP Denied. Judge White had a master calendar hearing today but the guard—C. Hughes—inquired and was told that I could not observe today.

4.8.26 BB Denied. I observed on the docket that 3 judges had hearings this morning at 8:30. Judge R. White had an Individual hearing at 8:30. Judge Carey Holiday had 9 master calendar hearings set for 8:30, and Judge Patrick Moore had 10 master calendar hearings set for 8:30. As I approached the security entrance, officer C Hughes stated that there would be no observations allowed today. I questioned about the master calendar hearings, and he stated again that no observers were to be allowed for any type of hearing - master or individual.

4.6.26 JP Denied. Security guard C. Hughes told me there are only individual hearings today and no one will ever be able to observe these cases.

3.30.26 JP Denied. Security guard told us no observations today.

3.20.26 NG Denied. Young African American male guard told us the judges do not allow visitors in the courtroom for Individual Hearings.

3.17.26 BB Denied. Black female guard said She said, "No master hearings today so you can't observe "

3.13.26 NG Denied. Young black male security guard said that the judge does not let the public inside the court room for individual hearings.

3.12.26 MP Denied. Middle aged African American male no name tag visible. we Asked to observe Individual Hearings and were told no.

3.10.26 BB Denied. Security guard C Hughes said it's all Individual hearings today so I am not allowed. He also said he thinks master calendar hearings will begin to be held on Wednesdays and Thursdays. I asked if they would be morning or afternoon. He said he did not know.

3.9.26 JP Denied. Female Security guard informed me that there was nothing to observe today. Only individual hearings.

3.6.26 MP Denied. Male African American guard. I asked to observe individual hearings and was told I would never be allowed in. I replied that I knew that, but I would continue to make the request.

3.4.26 JK Denied by African American male guard nametag not visible. All hearings for the day were individual hearings. No observers allowed.

3.3.26 BB Denied. Black female guard. I arrived and checked the docket. All cases were Individual Hearings under Judge Thogersen and Judge R White. The entry way into the security area was blocked by a tape. I stuck my head into the area and inquired of a guard who was sitting near the metal scanner whether I would be allowed entry to observe court. She said. "No, all cases are individual so you can't come in." There were no master calendar hearings on today's docket.

3.2.26 NG denied.

2.27.26 MP. Denied C Hughes. There was no docket posted for today. I asked Mr. Hughes if there was court and he told me there were two individual hearings and no master calendar hearings scheduled. I requested access to the individual hearings, and he denied the request.

2.26.26 NG Denied. Young male clerical staff doing mail run. He advised us that we could not observe the hearings because sensitive information is sometimes disclosed during the hearing.

2.25.26 JK. Denied in part, admitted in part. African American middle age male guard. Only individual hearings were scheduled for the morning. No observers allowed, per the guard. Master hearings were scheduled for 1:00 but the guard was not clear if observers would be allowed. He questioned whether or not they were really master hearings, despite the docket listing them as master hearings. Another court watcher went in the afternoon and was admitted to the master hearings.

2.24.26 BB Denied. Sec guard Hughes. I looked at the docket. All hearings for today were Individual Hearings in the courts of Judge Romaine White and Judge Cassie Thomason. I asked the guard if I would be allowed into court. He said no. He said there will be more master hearings later in the week.

2.23.26 JP. Denied. Security guard said there is nothing to observe today. Individual hearings only scheduled.

2.20.26 MP Denied. African American female guard in 20s or 30s. I asked to observe the individual hearings and was told that was not allowed.

2.19.26 LC Denied. Guard young woman. Was told we're not allowed into individual hearings... There were four scheduled for today. They all had attorneys representing them in the judge was Romain-White. I asked if they are still holding master calendar hearings and the guard said yes, they're very irregular, but they are still holding them.

2.18.26 BB. Denied. Guard Dalcourt. I checked the docket and noticed that all hearings were Individual Hearings. There was a barricade tape across the entry door to court security area. I asked if I could be allowed in for court observation. Security guard Dalcourt said "No. Observers are not allowed in for Individual Hearings indefinitely until further notice."

2.13.26 MP Denied. Male out of sight. There were no master calendar hearings scheduled. I requested entry to the individual hearings and was denied. When I asked the reason, I was told "judge's Discretion."

2.12.26 BB Denied. Black female security guard. The security guard said there were Individual Hearings only today. I asked if I would be allowed to come in to observe. She replied "No, they don't let you come in for Individuals." I asked, "Did you double-check that today because they might have changed their mind since yesterday." She said, "they say no."

2.10.26 BB Denied. D Cole guard. The docket showed only individual hearings. I counted the hearings, checked the times, whether there were attorneys listed. The guard asked what I was doing. I replied that I was taking some notes and she asked why. I explained I was a volunteer

court observer and I was collecting data for “statistical purposes” for a form that I would complete. There was a tape barricade at the entry. I asked if I could be allowed to enter. She said No. She said the judge does not allow entry for individual hearings. I asked if she was sure that the judge would not allow it today. She said yes.

2.9.26 JP Denied. Young female guard. The security guard told me there were no master calendar hearings scheduled today so there was nothing to observe.

2.2.26 JP Denied. Was told by the security guard that there were only individual hearings today and nothing could be observed.

2.2.26 NG Denied. The guard told me that the judges do not allow third parties into the court to observe individual hearings.

1.29.26 LC Denied. Female guard. I arrived outside the restricted area about 805 and saw no respondents. I asked if I would be able to observe today and the guard said let me look at the schedule and see if there are any master calendar hearings. I said they are not and would like to observe an individual hearing. She said that is not possible. I said that in New Orleans observers were able to attend individual hearings and was unclear as to why there is a difference approach in Baton Rouge. She said this is just the way we do it... And I asked if it was at the judge’s discretion or policy. She went to ask the gentleman behind the glass counter and he said it was the judge’s decision. The judges were Thogersen and Romaine White. I waited until about 8:45 AM and never saw any respondents between 8 and 8:45, although there were three hearings scheduled at 8:30.

1.29.26 JP Denied. Middle-aged security guard, African American, female with no visible name tag. We asked to observe individual meetings and a guard told us no.

1.29.26 MP Denied. African American female middle age guard requested access to observe individual hearings and was told no.

1.26.26 JP Denied. Female Security guard. I was told that there were no master calendar hearings today so there was nothing to observe. NG also denied.

1.14.26 MP Denied. D Cole Security. I arrived at Immigration Court in Baton Rouge at about 12:50 pm to observe the 1:00 PM individual hearing for the respondent represented by Phillip Hunter. Ms. Cole asked what I wanted and, I was fumbling with my phone to get the details (I mainly use Signal Desktop because small touch screens are a pain) Before I got the details up, she disappeared and after about 5 minutes returned with the information that the judge would not allow me in the court room. No reason was given. Upon reflection, realize that I do not know if Mr. Hunter was part of the discussion or if he had the opportunity to request my presence.

1.13.26 MP Denied. Female African American Guard. I asked to observe and she told me that there were no public hearings today so I was not allowed to observe. I thanked her and left.

1.12.26 JP Denied. Security Guard. Informed by security guard that there was nothing to observe today. Only individual hearings are scheduled today and we are not allowed to observe it. NG also denied.

1.7.26 BB allowed to observe master hearing. Denied individual hearing.

1.5.26 NG denied

12.29.25 NG denied individual hearings.

12.22.25 NG denied individual hearings.

12.17.25 BB Master Hrng Allowed, Individual Hearings Denied. C Hughes Guard. I approached with 2 other observers. He politely said that they had master hearings and we were allowed to observe. I said "what about the 3 individual hearings under Judge Thogersen." He replied "no, you can't go in those." I said, "would you please ask the judge about today's hearings." He walked away for a moment and came back and continued his security checks of our bags etc. I said, "will we be allowed in to the 8:30 individuals?" He said, "no."

12.16.25 JK Denied. Female African American Guard. The guard asked me if I was there as an observer. She told me that there were no master hearings today and observers could not attend individual hearings. There were two scheduled for the morning.

12.15.25 NG denied individual hearings.

12.9.25 LM Denied. Johnny sits behind the window in waiting area. I approached Johnny at the window to check on the status of the MC hearings that morning and informed him I wished to observe. It was 8:40 am. He said he would check, but since court had started at 8:30 am, he wasn't sure if I could go in. He made a phone call and then informed me that I was not allowed to enter because the courts were already in session. He told me to come back at 10 am (for next scheduled hearings). Johnny said that Bryan was the one who said I could not enter the courtroom late.

12.8.25 NG denied individual hearings.

12.1.25 NG denied individual hearings.

11.24.25 NG allowed into master hearing. Denied for individual hearings.

11.19.25 DB Access granted for master hearings, denied for individual hearings. C Hughes Guard. We were allowed to enter and observe a Master Schedule hearing with Judge

Thogerson. There was one respondent with her young son. Following this hearing we were denied access to all scheduled Individual hearings for the day.

11.17.25 BB Denied for individual hearings, allowed for master hearings. C Hughes Guard. We told Security guard C Hughes that we were there to be observers. He said he would let the judges know. He returned and said that the judge for the Master Hearings agreed to let us in. But the judge (Cassie Thogersen) for the Individual Hearings said no. When Lisa C of our group asked why not, he handed us a paper which was the Fact Sheet and said to read bullet point 2. Bullet point 2 reads "The Immigration Judge makes a determination to limit attendance at or to close a hearing."

11.17.25 DB & NG Allowed Master hearing, denied individual hearings. Allowed entrance to Judge Romaine White's Master hearing and denied entry into Judge Cassie Morgeson's Individual hearing. C. Hughes stated that entry for observation was at the discretion of the judge and Judge Morgeson would not allow entry.

## ATTACHMENT D

### CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

Code of Federal Regulations Title 8, Section 1003.27 governs public access to immigration court hearings.<sup>11</sup>

8 Code of Federal Regulations Section 1003.27 Public access to hearings, states:

All hearings, other than exclusion hearings, shall be open to the public except that:

(a) Depending upon physical facilities, the Immigration Judge may place reasonable limitations upon the number in attendance at any one time with priority being given to the press over the general public;

(b) For the purpose of protecting witnesses, parties, or the public interest, the Immigration Judge may limit attendance or hold a closed hearing.

(c) In any proceeding before an Immigration Judge concerning an abused alien spouse, the hearing and the Record of Proceeding shall be closed to the public unless the abused spouse agrees that the hearing and the Record of Proceeding shall be open to the public. In any proceeding before an Immigration Judge concerning an abused alien child, the hearing and the Record of Proceeding shall be closed to the public.

(d) Proceedings before an Immigration Judge shall be closed to the public if information subject to a protective order under § 1003.46, which has been filed under seal pursuant to § 1003.31(d), may be considered

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-8/chapter-V/subchapter-A/part-1003/subpart-C/section-1003.27>

## ATTACHMENT E

### US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE POLICY MANUAL MANDATES OPEN PUBLIC ACCESS TO IMMIGRATION COURT UNLESS THERE ARE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

On February 10, 2026 the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) of the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued an updated Policy Manual.<sup>12</sup> Chapter 3 of the DOJ policy manual covers Hearings before the Immigration Judges.<sup>13</sup> Section 3.8 covers Public Access.<sup>14</sup> This section states:

#### “(a) General Public

(1) Hearings - Hearings in removal proceedings are generally open to the public. However, special rules may apply in the following instances:

Evidentiary hearings involving an application for asylum or withholding of removal (“restriction on removal”), or a claim brought under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, are open to the public unless the respondent expressly requests that the hearing be closed. The Immigration Judge inquires whether the respondent requests such closure.

Hearings involving an abused alien child are closed to the public. Hearings involving an abused alien spouse are closed to the public unless the abused spouse agrees that the hearing and the Record of Proceedings will be open to the public.

Proceedings are closed to the public if information may be considered which is subject to a protective order and was filed under seal.

See 8 C.F.R. §§ 1003.27, 1003.31(d), 1003.46, 1208.6, 1240.10(b), 1240.11(c)(3)(i). Only parties, their practitioner(s) of record, employees of the Department of Justice, and persons authorized by the Immigration Judge may attend a closed hearing.

(2) Immigration Judges authorized to close hearings - The Immigration Judge may limit attendance or close a hearing to protect parties, witnesses, or the public interest, even if the hearing would normally be open to the public. See 8 C.F.R. § 1003.27(b).

(3) Motions to close hearing — For hearings not subject to the special rules in subsection (1), above, parties may make an oral or written motion asking that the Immigration Judge close the hearing. See 8 C.F.R. § 1003.27(b). The motion should set forth in detail the reason(s) for requesting that the hearing be closed. If in writing, the motion should

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/policy-manual-eoir/part-II/icpm>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/policy-manual-eoir/part-II/icpm/chapter-3>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/policy-manual-eoir/part-II/icpm/chapter-3-8>

include a cover page labeled “MOTION FOR CLOSED HEARING” and comply with the deadlines and requirements for filing. See Chapter 2 (Filing with the Immigration Court), Appendix D (Cover Pages).

(b) News Media – Representatives of the news media may attend hearings that are open to the public. The news media are subject to the general prohibition on electronic devices in the courtroom. See Chapter 3.12 (Electronic Devices). The news media are encouraged to notify the Public Resources and Communicative Division and the court administrator before attending a hearing. See Appendix A (Directory).”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/policy-manual-eoir/part-II/icpm/chapter-3-8>

## **ATTACHMENT F**

US DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FACT SHEET OF FEBRUARY 2026 MANDATES OPEN PUBLIC ACCESS TO IMMIGRATION COURT UNLESS THERE ARE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES and VISITORS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO CHECK IN WITH COURT PERSONNEL BEFORE ENTERING A COURTROOM TO OBSERVE

In February 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a Fact Sheet for Observing Immigration Court Hearings.<sup>16</sup> That fact sheet says: “Immigration court hearings are generally open to the public with limited exceptions, as specified by law.” And later: “Visitors are not required to check in with court personnel before entering a courtroom to observe, although the presiding Immigration Judge may ask all visitors to identify themselves at the start of the hearing.”

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<sup>16</sup> [www.justice.gov/eoir/media/1416861/dl?inline](https://www.justice.gov/eoir/media/1416861/dl?inline)