

U.S. NEWS

California revokes 17,000 commercial driver's licenses for immigrants



1 of 2 | Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy speaks alongside Vice President JD Vance about the impact of the government shutdown on the aviation industry, outside of the West Wing of the White House, Thursday, Oct. 30, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo) [Read More](#)



BY [JOSH FUNK](#)

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California plans to revoke 17,000 commercial driver's licenses given to immigrants after discovering the expiration dates went past when the drivers were legally allowed to be in the U.S., state officials said Wednesday.

The announcement follows harsh criticism from the Trump administration about California and other states granting licenses to people in the country illegally. The issue was thrust into the public's consciousness in August, when a tractor-trailer driver not authorized to be in the U.S. made an illegal U-turn and caused a crash in Florida [that killed three people](#).

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said Wednesday that California's action to revoke these licenses is an admission that the state acted improperly even though it previously defended its licensing standards. California launched its review of commercial driver's licenses it issued after Duffy raised concerns.

"After weeks of claiming they did nothing wrong, Gavin Newsom and California have been caught red-handed. Now that we've exposed their lies, 17,000 illegally issued trucking licenses are being revoked," Duffy said, referring to the state's governor. "This is just the tip of iceberg. My team will continue to force California to prove they have removed every illegal immigrant from behind the wheel of semitrucks and school buses."

Newsom's office said that every one of the drivers whose license is being revoked had valid work authorizations from the federal government. At first, his office declined to disclose the exact reason for revoking the licenses, saying only they violated state law. Later, his office revealed the state law it was referring to was one that requires the licenses expire on or before a person's legal status to be in the United State ends, as reported to the DMV.

Still, Newsom's spokesperson Brandon Richards shot back at Duffy in a statement.

"Once again, the Sean 'Road Rules' Duffy fails to share the truth — spreading easily disproven falsehoods in a sad and desperate attempt to please his dear leader," Richards said.

Fatal truck crashes in Texas and Alabama earlier this year also highlight questions about these licenses. A [fiery California crash](#) that killed three people last month involved a truck driver in the country illegally, only adding to the concerns.

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Duffy previously [imposed new restrictions](#) on which immigrants can qualify for commercial driver's licenses. He said earlier this fall that California and five other states had improperly issued commercial driver's licenses to noncitizens, but California is the only state Duffy has taken action against because it was the first one where an audit was completed. The reviews in the other states have been delayed by the government shutdown, but the Transportation Department is urging all of them to tighten their standards.

Duffy [revoked \\$40 million](#) in federal funding because he said California isn't enforcing [English language requirements](#) for truckers, and he reiterated Wednesday that he will take another \$160 million from the state over these improperly issued licenses if they don't invalidate every illegal license and address all the concerns. But revoking these licenses is part of the state's effort to comply.

The new rules for commercial driver's licenses that Duffy announced in September make getting them extremely hard for immigrants because only three specific classes of visa holders will be eligible. States will also have to verify an applicant's immigration status in a federal database. The licenses will be valid for up to one year unless the applicant's visa expires sooner.

Under the new rules, only 10,000 of the 200,000 noncitizens who have commercial licenses would qualify for them, which would only be available to drivers who have an H-2a, H-2b or E-2 visa. H-2a is for temporary agricultural workers while H-2b is for temporary nonagricultural workers, and E-2 is for people who make substantial investments in a U.S. business. But the rules won't be enforced retroactively, so those 190,000 drivers will be allowed to keep their commercial licenses at least until they come up for renewal.

Those new requirements were not in place at the time the 17,000 California licenses were issued. But those drivers were given notices that their licenses will expire in 60 days.

Duffy said in September that investigators found that one quarter of the 145 licenses they reviewed in California shouldn't have been issued. He cited four California licenses that remained valid after the driver's work permit expired — sometimes years after.

Newsom's office said the state followed guidance it received from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security about issuing these licenses to noncitizens.

Associated Press writer Sophie Austin contributed to this report from Sacramento, California.



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