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SPORTS, 11A

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Immigrants take cases to federal courts

New bond rule leaves thousands stuck behind bars

Danae King
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents are arresting record numbers of immigrants. The number of beds to house them has increased 12-fold in Ohio since President Donald Trump took office in January 2025.

And, now, a new record has likely

been broken: the number of immigrants who are filing cases in federal courts instead of the typical civil immigration courts across the nation.

That's because a Trump administration policy change and increased enforcement have resulted in thousands of immigrants – especially those with legal, but not permanent status – remaining behind bars. Historically, they would have either been released on bond by

immigration judges or never arrested or detained in the first place and been able to go through legal proceedings while living and working legally in the United States.

But now, immigration judges say they don't have the authority to issue bond for detained immigrants, and not even immigrants with no criminal history who are not a flight risk are being released.

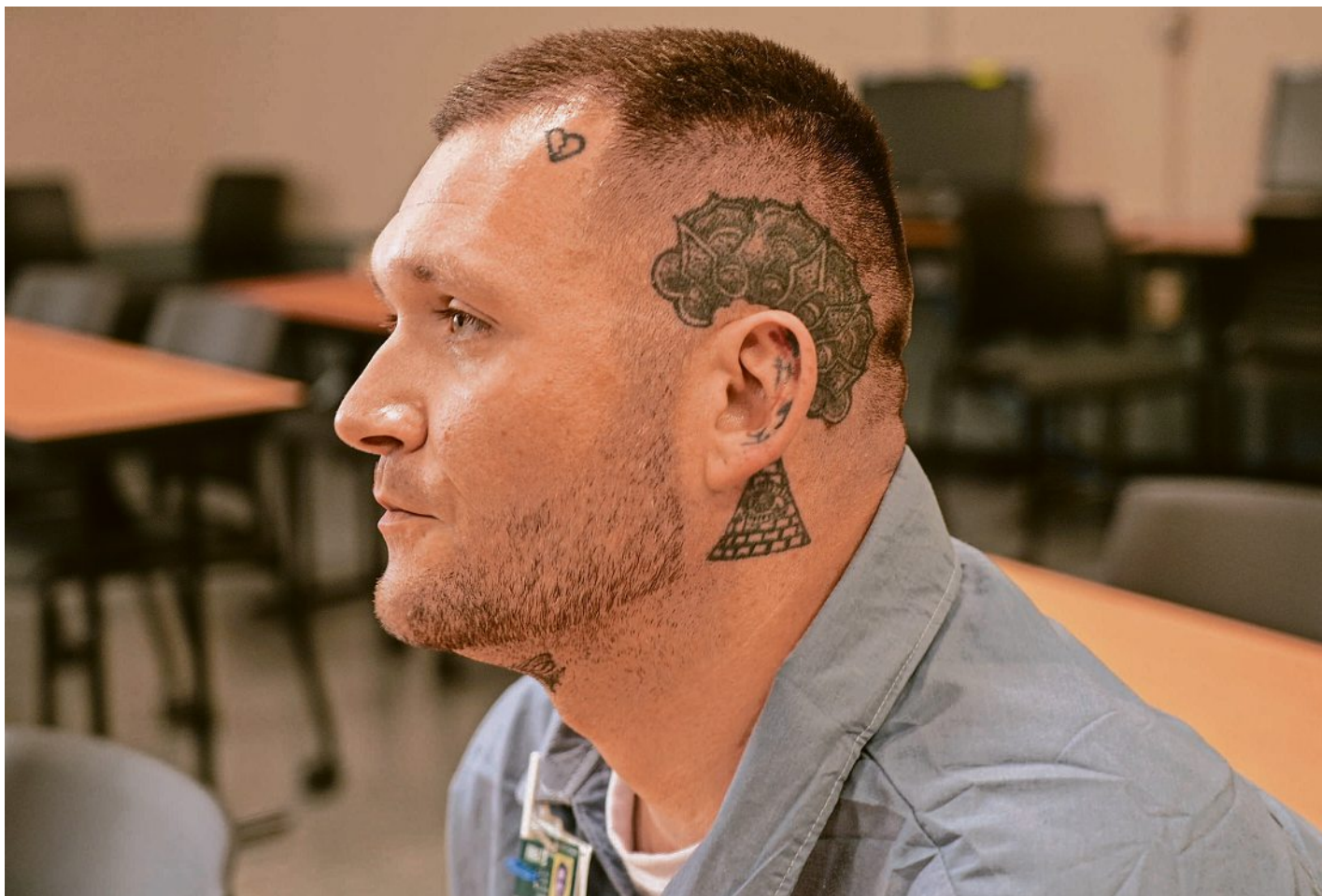
With no opportunity for bond, more than 30,000 detained immigrants filed habeas corpus cases in federal district

courts since January 2025, according to a ProPublica tracker, challenging their detention and saying it violates their constitutional rights. That is the highest level in history, per ProPublica.

In Ohio's two federal district courts, 202 habeas cases for immigrants have been filed since May 2025, according to a search of federal court records. Just one was filed during the final year of former President Joe Biden's term, from Jan. 1, 2024, to Jan. 20, 2025.

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SMUGGLED



In the spring of 2021, Cory Sutphin began working for a smuggling ring that used drones to drop drugs and cell phones inside Ohio's state prisons. Police arrested him in November 2021, he took a plea deal and is now serving a nearly five-year sentence. "I think about it now, it was the dumbest thing I could've possibly ever done in my life. Dumbest thing. Hands down," he said. DORAL CHENOWETH/THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Meet the drone pilot who flooded Ohio prisons with drugs

Laura A. Bischoff
State Bureau
USA TODAY NETWORK

Under the cover of darkness, Cory Sutphin piloted his drone directly to an open prison cell window, where a hand grabbed the payload: drugs, cell phones and other contraband.

For months, Sutphin operated a delivery service, like DoorDash, for drugs inside Ohio prisons.

He taught himself how to fly drones he'd buy off Facebook Marketplace. Google Maps gave him a bird's eye view of the properties.

He started in the drug smuggling ring as a driver in the spring of 2021, when he pocketed \$1,200 for a less than three-hour round-trip to the two state prisons in Chillicothe.

Easy money, he thought.

"I think about it now, it was the dumbest thing I could've possibly ever

done in my life. Dumbest thing. Hands down," said Sutphin, who is now serving a nearly five-year sentence at Chillicothe Correctional Institution.

Sutphin supplied the black market with dangerous drugs that feed addiction and bring violence and death inside Ohio prisons. After investigators got a lucky break, they shut off the pipeline used by Sutphin and his collaborators.

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'Cicada' COVID variant found in 25 states, including Ohio

Alex Perry and Mary Walrath-Holdridge
Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

A "highly mutated" COVID variant that flew under the radar for years has been detected in a growing number of U.S. states, including Ohio, health officials said this week.

The strain, nicknamed "Cicada," had been detected in 25 states as of March 27, according to USA TODAY.

The strain accounts for only a small number of cases in the United States, but represents up to 30% in some European countries.

Still, the CDC said its monitoring of the spread "provides valuable information" about the strain's potential to infect those who have been vaccinated or immunized from a previous infection.

Starting to feel sick? The Ohio Department of Health offers guidelines on what to do if you test positive for COVID-19, Cicada or otherwise. Learn more about symptoms, prevention and treatment.

Where has Cicada COVID-19 been found?

The Cicada COVID-19 variant has been detected in Ohio and 24 other states, with states in New England and the Eastern Seaboard seeing the most positive tests.

Ohio COVID-19 hospitalizations trending down

Ohio has seen a steady decrease in COVID-19 hospitalizations since a peak at the beginning of January 2026. The state reported 136 hospitalizations for the week ending March 21 (the most recent data available at the time

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