



Short-Term Holding Facilities Standards Restoration Act

This bill responds to the situation at the Arizona Removal Operations Coordination Center (AROCC) in Mesa, Arizona. Historically, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) standards capped holding room use at 12 hours, absent exceptional circumstances. This short-term stay standard was put in place because these spaces lack beds, medical infrastructure, and basic accommodations for longer stays. However, in 2025, ICE issued a nationwide waiver allowing individuals to be held for up to 72 hours in these facilities, effectively tripling the permissible detention time.¹

At the AROCC facility, detainees have been held well beyond the 12-hour standard, operating the facility far above its stated capacity. In some cases, hundreds of individuals have been confined in a space designed for 157 people. During an unannounced oversight visit, Reps. Stanton, Ansari, and Grijalva observed detainees packed “like sardines” into overcrowded cells, with many forced to lie on concrete floors without beds or medical care.²

The bill would restore a clear 12-hour limit for detainee stays in ICE holding facilities.

The Short-Term Holding Facilities Standards Restoration Act restores the 12-hour limit while allowing for limited exceptions in cases such as medical emergencies or transportation delays. The bill also requires DHS to document and justify any extended detention and to ensure humane conditions in holding facilities. The legislation also strengthens oversight by mandating recordkeeping, annual reporting to Congress, and periodic audits by the DHS Inspector General.

For questions or to cosponsor, email Mia.Rubio@mail.house.gov

¹ <https://immpolicytracking.org/policies/ice-waives-the-12-hour-holding-cell-limit-allowing-detainees-to-be-held-for-72-hours/#/tab-policy-overview>

² <https://azmirror.com/2026/04/10/ice-overcrowding-like-sardines-congressional-oversight-arizona/>



Section 1. Short Title

Names the bill the “Short-Term Holding Facility Standards Restoration Act.”

Section 2. Findings

States that ICE holding facilities are intended for short-term custody and processing, that prior ICE policy treated 12 hours as the short-term limit absent exceptional circumstances, and that prolonged detention in these facilities harms detainee welfare and conflicts with the facilities’ intended purpose. It also says restoring the 12-hour standard would align with prior agency guidance.

Section 3. Limitation on Duration of Detention

Requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to ensure that ICE holding facilities are used only for short-term custody, unless exceptional circumstances apply. Defines exceptional circumstances as temporary and unforeseen situations requiring immediate action, including medical emergencies, natural disasters or facility disruptions, transportation or transfer delays outside DHS control, and other exigent operational conditions determined by the Secretary.

Section 4. Humane Conditions

Requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to maintain basic standards of safety and care in ICE holding facilities. Facilities must be safe, clean, equipped with restrooms, and free of potential weapons. Requires meals at least every 6 hours; immediate and unrestricted access to meals, snacks, milk, and juice for minors, pregnant women, and breastfeeding women regardless of how long they’ve been in custody; and constant access to drinking water in every room where detainees are held.

Section 5. Documentation and Compliance

Requires DHS to create contemporaneous documentation whenever a detainee is held in an ICE holding facility for longer than short-term custody. It also requires those records to be kept for 5 years for oversight, audit, and reporting purposes.

Section 6. Oversight and Reporting

Requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to submit an annual report to Congress describing: the number of detainees held beyond short-term custody in ICE holding facilities, the duration of that custody, the justification for each instance, and any corrective actions taken. It also directs the DHS Inspector General to conduct periodic audits of ICE holding facilities and DHS records to assess compliance with the Act.

Section 7. Definitions

Defines a “holding facility” as a facility or holding room used for temporary custody, processing, or transfer and not intended for long-term detention. Defines “short-term custody” as detention in a holding facility for no more than 12 hours, absent exceptional circumstances.