ICE kidnaps 76-year-old green card holder with stage 4 cancer at citizenship interview

Marc Wells
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Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has imprisoned Loreto Javar, a 76-year-old lawful permanent resident suffering from stage 4 prostate cancer, for more than two months after agents kidnapped him at an interview for US citizenship.

Since ICE seized him on June 23, Javar has missed multiple oncology appointments, developed a blood clot and suffered rapid weight loss, according to his daughter, Daisy Javar. He also suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cardiovascular conditions that require blood thinners and precisely timed medication.

Javar's oral cancer medication must be taken with food at regular intervals to be absorbed properly. His family reports that meals inside the Northwest ICE Processing Center in Tacoma, Washington, are served at wildly irregular hours, with lunch sometimes arriving at 6 p.m. and dinner near midnight.

For a 76-year-old man with advanced cancer, imprisonment in a detention system notorious for withholding medication and denying outside medical care amounts to a virtual death sentence.

Javar, a retired hotel worker, came to the United States from the Philippines in 1995. He has lived and worked legally in the country for more than 30 years, paid taxes and repeatedly renewed his green card, most recently in December.

On June 23, he arrived at the US Citizenship and Immigration Services field office in Tukwila, Washington for an interview connected to the citizenship application he had filed last November. ICE agents were waiting inside. They arrested him and transferred him to the privately operated Tacoma detention center, run by the multibillion-dollar prison corporation The GEO Group.

ICE spokesperson Jason Chudy said the agency arrested Javar because he allegedly failed to disclose a criminal conviction when applying for his immigrant visa in 1995. Chudy declared that Javar was "therefore ineligible to remain in the United States now."

According to court documents, the allegation concerns an altercation in the Philippines during the 1970s, under the martial-law dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. The incident resulted in a fatality. Javar reportedly served about three years in prison before being released on parole.

Javar's daughter said her father had never told his family about the conviction. Before emigrating, however, he obtained an official clearance from the Philippine National Bureau of Investigation stating that he had no active criminal record. For the next three decades, the US government repeatedly approved his permanent residency without raising the allegation.

ICE claims that his failure to report the conviction constituted "material misrepresentation." The government would have to establish that Javar knowingly and willfully concealed a material fact to obtain an immigration benefit.

Whatever the ultimate disposition of that allegation, nothing requires the government to imprison a gravely ill elderly man while it pursues civil removal proceedings. Javar has no criminal record in the United States and has lived openly at the same address in Fife, Washington for years. He poses no flight risk or danger to the public.

The Northwest ICE Processing Center has an extensive record of medical neglect. Earlier this year, federal Judge Tana Lin ordered the release of Greggy Sorio, another Filipino lawful permanent resident imprisoned at the same facility, after finding a "pattern of failures" in his medical treatment.

Sorio repeatedly sought treatment for bleeding, abdominal pain and swelling in his foot. Detention staff delayed outside care until he could barely walk. By the time he was hospitalized, an untreated bone infection required two amputation surgeries that removed a toe and part of his foot. Doctors also diagnosed him with

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ulcerative colitis, acute blood-loss anemia, kidney damage and severe vitamin D deficiency.

Lin found that the "objectively unreasonable failures" in Sorio's medical care had more likely than not caused him extreme pain and permanent disability. She ordered his immediate release in February. ICE deported him to the Philippines in a wheelchair one week later.

Javar is now being subjected to the same system of neglect.

Over the past three years, the Washington State Department of Health has received more than 3,500 complaints concerning conditions inside the Tacoma facility. Detainees have reported medical emergencies being ignored, prescribed medication being withheld, drinking water with a foul taste and food containing raw meat, burned plastic, metal, hair, splinters and worms.

Before a federal judge ordered GEO to admit state health inspectors in July, the company had turned them away ten times, including twice after an appeals court affirmed the state's inspection authority. Two people have died at the facility since 2024 and six others have attempted suicide.

Prisoners have organized 20 hunger strikes at the facility this year. The latest involved more than 140 detainees who refused food for nearly a week to protest inedible meals, irregular serving times and the denial of medical care. The strike ended only after GEO promised larger portions and new food options.

The conditions threatening Javar's life are replicated throughout ICE's network of private prisons, military camps, county jails and temporary holding rooms.

At least 57 people have died in ICE custody since Trump returned to the White House in January 2025. The latest known victim, 51-year-old Lianyong Wei, was found unresponsive on August 23, only hours after entering ICE custody in the Northern Mariana Islands.

A report issued by Human Rights Watch and Physicians for Human Rights found that 52 people died during the first 500 days of Trump's second term. The mortality rate in ICE custody has more than doubled since Trump's return and is nearly four times the rate recorded under the Biden administration.

The institutional indifference is so pervasive that ICE has reportedly failed to pay for outside medical care provided to detainees since October 2025. The breakdown has resulted in delayed and canceled appointments, denials of critical treatment and healthcare providers refusing to accept ICE patients. Immigrant rights advocates have aptly described this as a "death policy."

Washington's Democratic Governor Bob Ferguson and Attorney General Nick Brown have pursued litigation to allow health inspections at the Tacoma facility. Democratic politicians have conducted oversight visits and the Pierce County Council has enacted a temporary zoning moratorium affecting detention facilities.

None of these measures challenges ICE's authority to imprison Javar or demands the closure of the Tacoma concentration camp. They seek to regulate the conditions under which more than 1,400 immigrants continue to be held for profit.

The Democratic Party built and funded the deportation apparatus now being expanded by Trump. Democratic administrations deported millions, expanded detention and entrenched cooperation between ICE and local police. This year Democratic leaders cleared the way for ICE and Customs and Border Protection to receive tens of billions of dollars in additional funding through 2029 without a single binding restriction on their operations.

Their appeals for inspections and oversight serve to conceal this political responsibility while leaving the machinery of mass detention and deportation intact.

The seizure of Javar at his citizenship interview demonstrates the fraud of claims that ICE is targeting only "violent criminals." The case also demonstrates the limitations of relying on the courts. A federal judge ordered Sorio released after ICE's medical neglect permanently disabled him. One week later, the government deported him in a wheelchair.

The defense of Loreto Javar is inseparable from the defense of the entire working class. Workers must demand his immediate and unconditional release, freedom for every immigrant detainee, the closure of the concentration camps and the abolition of ICE, Customs and Border Protection and the Department of Homeland Security.

These demands can be achieved only through the independent political mobilization of the working class against the two capitalist parties and the profit system they defend.

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