

Transportation Secretary Pulls \$200 Million From California Over Unenforced CDL Requirements

- By Seijah Drake
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Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy announced Tuesday that his department is withholding an additional \$160 million in federal highway and safety funds from California over the state's continued practice of issuing commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) to illegal immigrants — a move he warned could escalate to revoking California's authority to issue CDLs entirely.

The announcement follows a fatal October 21 crash near Ontario, California, in which an illegal immigrant driving a tractor-trailer allegedly under the influence of drugs killed three people. The accident, Duffy said, was the result of "California's reckless defiance" of federal transportation standards and English proficiency requirements for commercial drivers.

"You gotta speak English, you gotta understand road signs, you gotta be able to talk to law enforcement," Duffy told Fox News host Brian Kilmeade. "If you get pulled over or there is a crash, law enforcement has to be able to communicate

with you.”

\$200 Million and Counting

The new penalty brings the total amount of federal funding withheld from California’s Department of Motor Vehicles and Department of Transportation to \$200 million. Earlier this month, Duffy froze \$40 million in grants after the state allegedly ignored requirements that CDL holders demonstrate English fluency and comprehension of traffic laws.

Duffy accused California officials of contorting the law to extend CDL non-domicile eligibility (intended for Americans and legal residents who live in one state and train or work in another) to people in the country unlawfully — even after the Department of Transportation implemented stricter rules in September in response to a string of deadly crashes involving non-citizen drivers.

“They are getting the licenses now from other parts of the country and they’re issuing the licenses against the law,” Duffy said. “So I’m going to pull another \$160 million from Gavin. That’s just the start. There is millions more. We can actually revoke their ability to issue commercial driver’s licenses.”

Fatal Accidents Trigger National Crackdown

The Transportation Department’s new guidelines came after a deadly August crash in Florida allegedly caused by an illegal immigrant who made an illegal U-turn on a highway, killing three people. Investigators later determined the driver failed an English proficiency test and could not identify most basic road signs.

The Ontario crash, involving a driver with a California-issued CDL, drew national outrage and renewed scrutiny of Gov. Gavin Newsom’s long-standing policies extending driving privileges to illegal immigrants.

California has issued CDLs to non-citizens since 2015 under AB 60, a state law that allows illegal immigrants to obtain driver’s licenses.

Federal-State Clash Intensifies

The escalating feud between the Trump administration and California reflects a broader clash over immigration enforcement. Newsom has positioned his state as a sanctuary for illegal immigrants, opposing Trump crackdowns and even filing lawsuits against federal efforts to deploy the National Guard to defend Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facilities from violent protests.

Duffy said the administration is reviewing whether additional federal programs tied to transportation funding could be suspended until California comes into compliance.