

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 2632

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As of February 20, 2026

**Title:** An act relating to modernizing terminology when referring to individuals who are not citizens or nationals of the United States.

**Brief Description:** Modernizing terminology when referring to individuals who are not citizens or nationals of the United States.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Thai, Mena, Davis, Gregerson, Parshley, Hall, Nance, Fosse, Obras, Goodman, Cortes, Ormsby, Taylor, Scott, Zahn, Macri, Santos and Salahuddin.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/16/26, 58-39.

**Committee Activity:** State Government, Tribal Affairs & Elections: 2/20/26.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Replaces certain references to the term alien with the term noncitizen.
- Requires all state and local statutes and other official documents enacted after July 1, 2026, to use the term noncitizen or other context-appropriate term, instead of the term alien, when referring to an individual who is not a citizen or national of the United States, unless use of the term alien is required to comply with federal law or funding requirements.
- Allows state agencies to use the expedited rulemaking process if the proposed rule only substitutes the term alien with the term noncitizen or other context-appropriate term but does not change the effect of the rule.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL AFFAIRS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Greg Vogel (786-7413)

**Background:** Terms in Federal and State Law. Alien is defined as any person who is not a

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citizen or national of the United States under federal law. State law similarly, where alien is defined, defines alien as a person who is not a citizen of the United States or references the federal law definition.

A national of the United States is defined in federal law as:

- a citizen of the United States; or
- a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States.

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) confers United States nationality, but not United States citizenship, on persons born in an outlying possession of the United States or born of a parent or parents who are noncitizen nationals who meet certain physical presence or residence requirements. The INA defines the term outlying possessions of the United States as American Samoa and Swains Island.

Nonimmigrant alien under federal law encompasses persons who have been granted the right to travel or temporarily reside in the United States. There are a number of nonimmigrant categories, with each category having its own specific purpose and conditions. Nonimmigrant classifications include:

- foreign government officials;
- visitors for business or pleasure;
- treaty traders and investors;
- students;
- representatives of foreign information media;
- religious workers; and
- temporary workers and trainees.

Qualified alien is defined as a person who, at the time the person applies for or receives a federal public benefit, is:

- lawfully admitted for permanent residency under the INA;
- granted asylum under the INA;
- a refugee admitted under the INA;
- paroled in the United States under the INA;
- having their deportation withheld under the INA;
- granted conditional entry under the INA;
- a Cuban or Haitian entrant, as defined in the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980; or
- lawfully residing in the United States with a Compact of Free Association.

An alien registration number is a unique number assigned by the federal Department of Homeland Security to track and identify a person across the United States immigration system. The number appears on immigration forms and petitions, including green card and asylum applications, that a person may file.

Expedited Rulemaking. A state agency may file notice for the expedited adoption of rules if the proposed rule meets one of the following criteria:

- the proposed rule relates only to internal governmental operations that are not subject to violation by a person;
- the proposed rule adopts or incorporates by reference without material change state and federal statutes or regulations; rules of other state agencies; or industry standards, if the material adopted or incorporated regulates the same subject matter and conduct as the adopting or incorporating rule;
- the proposed rule only corrects typographical errors, makes address or name changes, or clarifies language of a rule without changing its effect;
- the content of the proposed rule is explicitly and specifically dictated by statute;
- the proposed rule has been the subject of negotiated rulemaking, pilot rulemaking, or some other process that involved substantial participation by interested parties before the development of the proposed rule; or
- the proposed rule is being amended after a certain review process.

The agency must file its intent to use the expedited rulemaking process with the Office of the Code Reviser, and the notice is published in the Washington State Register (WSR). If anyone objects to the expedited process within 45 days after the WSR notice is published, the agency must proceed using the regular rulemaking process. If no written objections are received during the 45-day public notice period, the agency may enter an order adopting the rule without further notice or public hearing.

**Summary of Bill:** Except where required by federal law or necessary to comply with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to the allocation of federal funds to the state, references to the term alien that are used to describe persons are replaced with the term noncitizen. In certain instances, references to the term alien are replaced with person who is not a citizen or national of the United States to conform with the original meaning of the statute.

Noncitizen is defined as an individual who is not a citizen or national of the United States.

Except where required by federal law or necessary to comply with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to the allocation of federal funds to the state, all state and local government statutes, codes, rules, regulations, and other official documents enacted after July 1, 2026, must use the term noncitizen or other context-appropriate term, instead of the term alien, when referring to an individual who is not a citizen or national of the United States. All state and local entities are urged to review their statutes, codes, rules, regulations, and other official documents and revise them to omit the use of the term alien when referring to an individual who is not a citizen or national of the United States.

A state agency may use the expedited rulemaking process if the proposed rule only substitutes the term alien, when used to refer to an individual who is not a citizen or national of the United States, with the term noncitizen or other context-appropriate term and makes

necessary grammatical changes and definitions resulting from the substitution, but does not change the effect of the rule. An agency may proceed with entering an order adopting the rule without further notice or public hearing even if the agency receives written objections to the rule.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 18, 2026.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Alien is not a legal term that adds clarity to our laws. Referring to people as aliens is incredibly disrespectful. The term is often associated with crime, drugs, smuggling, and danger. The term is used to dehumanize people, to justify policies and practices that continue to ostracize immigrants and refugees. Language is powerful and this simple but significant change will have a large impact on how we see and treat people. If we don't fix these negative terms, we condone them. This bill takes a word that is at best a confusing synonym that always requires context and is at worst dehumanizing to all Washingtonians without U.S. citizenship and replaces it with its literal and objective meaning, non-citizen.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Chach Duarte White, Legal Counsel for Youth and Children; Andres Munoz; Elizabeth Fitzgearld; Nicholas Mejía.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.