

The most recent ICA newsletter (April), contained articles from the President, the President-Elect (who serves as the panner for the conference), and the Executive Director. Those articles are pasted below (please excuse the formatting; we no longer produce a formatted PDF newsletter, so the newsletter goes out as an email with links to posts on our online member community site). After these articles, you will find earlier messages sent by the Executive Committee in mid and late February.

## President's Column:

# Redoubling the Commitment to Academic Autonomy and Free Inquiry

- 1. President's Column: Redoubling the Commitment to Academic Autonomy and Free Inquiry

[Silvio Waisbord](#)

**By: Silvio Waisbord, ICA President (George Washington U)**

In the past weeks, several members approached me to talk about the state of affairs in the United States, and what ICA can or should do amid the barrage of shocking, troubling news. I greatly appreciate those who reached out, the conversations, as well as the concern from colleagues outside the US.

ICA's Executive Committee continues to monitor the situation closely not only in terms of the potential impact on the forthcoming conference in Denver, but also in relation to essential conditions of the academic enterprise – autonomy and free and open inquiry. Every act that threatens dissent, freedom of thought and speech, and democratic deliberation erodes the ground on where we stand. The foundations that we often take for granted in democratic systems. The bedrock values that we cherish and that sustain our research, teaching, and service.

As I write this piece in Washington, DC, the situation is changing day by day, in disconcerting and worrisome ways. Among other matters, recent developments raise legitimate concerns about academic freedom, funding, and the future of scientific research as a public good.

It feels as if unfettered discourse cannot longer be considered a given. The legal and normative safeguards that protect our work are shaky. Certain topics and questions suddenly have different meaning and resonance. Recent news stories report that corporations are modifying programs and purging their language, and that universities avoid mentioning politically charged topics. Folks seem a bit more

cautious about public expression, and engage in small, everyday acts of self-censorship. Think twice about what to say and where to say it, including social media postings. Consider whether some concepts and issues may attract unwanted attention. Check out their digital presence with an eye for pruning potentially "problematic" expressions.

These conditions remind us that the democratic rights and the academic conditions we enjoy are the result of longstanding social and political changes and struggles, as well as complex institutional developments that should never be taken for granted.

It is also important to remember that these alarming developments are happening simultaneously with heartening, redoubling efforts in defense of free speech and academic autonomy by colleagues, journalists, universities, public figures, and ordinary citizens. When those values are being challenged, we find comfort in actions that demonstrate precisely why they matter.

These actions make me hopeful, even though pessimism is justifiable. Standing up in support of bedrock values of autonomy and free inquiry is critical as we, as scholars and ICA members, especially those in U.S. universities, continue to navigate unsettled conditions. We need to defend the principles of academic knowledge grounded in rigor, independence, critique, skepticism, and dialogue.

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## President-Elect's Column: #ICA25 Update: Let's Stand Together

- 1. President-Elect's Column: #ICA25 Update: Let's Stand Together

[Thomas Hanitzsch](#)

By: Thomas Hanitzsch, ICA President-Elect, LMU Munich

We all witness with horror the current political developments in the United States, particularly the unprecedented attacks on academia and higher education. In early March, the Trump administration canceled \$400 million in funding for Columbia University without the legally required due process. Brown University advised its international students and faculty to postpone travel plans. En route to a conference, a French researcher was banned from entering the U.S. after criticizing Trump's cuts to science funding. All of this has happened within just a few days. Fears that these developments mark the beginnings of a broader campaign to stifle academic freedom in the U.S. are clearly justified.

ICA leadership and headquarters constantly monitor the situation and discuss possible measures to cope with the consequences of a changing political sentiment in the U.S. We will take all actions necessary to protect our conference attendees to the best of our abilities. However, as cynical as this may sound, the major problem we face is not what we already know but the level of uncertainty that confronts us. Given the current speed and erratic nature of U.S. policy change, it is almost impossible to predict what will happen in the coming weeks.

We hear your concerns expressed in social media conversations, personal interactions, and messages sent directly to us. We are aware of suggestions to make #ICA25 fully hybrid or to move it to another, more welcoming place. As we explained in a message sent to our membership recently, these options are not viable at the point where we are. However, instead of spending many words on what is impossible to do, let me briefly explain what we can do, what we did, and what is in the making:

The first and perhaps most straightforward measure is to steadily communicate – to stay in touch with our membership and be upfront about what is happening and the projected consequences for ICA and the conference. To this end, ICA has already broadcasted several messages to its members, and we will continue doing so in the next few weeks.

Second, we decided to create significant space at #ICA25 for our members and ICA leadership to voice concerns about the current assault on U.S. higher education, its consequences for ICA and its membership, necessary actions, and potential ramifications for future conference planning (notably with a close eye on ICA27 in Chicago). In addition to the long-planned special session Science Under Fire, which I announced in my [March column](#) of this newsletter, we will create several new sessions by reconfiguring the program in a way that allows us to keep the original program intact. Our staff at ICA headquarters is working hard to make that space for us, and I am very grateful for their flexibility to accommodate our needs. We are still discussing the content and format of those sessions. Feel free to reach out to me with any ideas you have.

Third, against growing concerns of people being detained by Homeland Security and deported from or denied entry to the U.S., we reached out to Denver Airport and VISIT DENVER, the official marketing agency for the city. They have been extremely accommodating and are taking our concerns very seriously. Here is the statement they provided to us:

*Denver International Airport and the city of Denver both look forward to welcoming ICA. We have spoken with our partners in Customs and Border Protection and have been assured that they are continuing to offer professional services and are not treating international travelers arriving for conventions any differently than visitors from other countries who are legally entering the U.S. While there has been much in the media and we understand the concerns, we have not heard any instances of or received any complaints about harassing or negative treatment of our visitors. We have made them aware that this group will be coming and are confident that the experience will be positive.*

As our most recent [EC message](#) confirms, Denver offers a liberal and welcoming environment for our conference participants. Colorado has been a “blue state” for almost twenty years, and the city of Denver maintains its strong commitment to [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#). That said, we absolutely respect – and understand – every decision not to come to Denver. If you wish to have your paper placed in a fully-remote online session, please fill out [this form](#), and headquarters will contact you with the next steps.

Finally, we should all remember that the U.S. is not the only country where academia is confronted with an increasingly hostile environment. Given dramatic shifts in the political climate in a range of nations, it can happen everywhere. Take the Netherlands as a recent example, where universities across the country face a massive defunding campaign.

Amidst all the darkness many of us experience these days, I believe #ICA25 can still give us an elevating experience of collegial solidarity. Let’s stand together with our colleagues and students from around the world. Let’s send a strong signal from Denver that we, as academics and citizens, have now switched from flight to fight mode.

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Thomas Hanitzsch  
Professor  
LMU Munich  
Munich

# Travel Guidance for International Visitors Attending ICA25

- 1. Travel Guidance for International Visitors Attending ICA25

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**By: Laura Sawyer, ICA Executive Director**

As with every ICA conference, we monitor U.S. State Department warnings and the advisories of other nations, as well as consulting human rights organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for the latest guidance and news on best practices for travel. That said, please understand that ICA is merely a U.S.-based nonprofit communication association, and any guidance given here or on the ICA website should not be construed as legal advice; one should always consult one's own government authority, travel agency, legal counsel, university, airline, and/or embassy/consulate for information and guidance.

**What type of Visa to apply for to attend the conference:**

Due to the Visa Waiver Program, many visitors will need only an ESTA. You can check [here](#). If you do need a visa, apply for a B-1, which is for temporary business such as attending a conference. When you arrive at immigration and the officer asks you why you are traveling, be sure to say you are attending the conference. If your answer is "tourism," that will not match your visa reason, and that will flag your entry. Always be consistent in your answers.

**Entry is a two-step process:**

- **First, you will go through immigration**, where you will show your passport, visa/ESTA, and any supporting documentation. You may be cleared on the first brief interview, or you may be selected for a secondary interview - don't

panic. Be polite and courteous; this happened during previous administrations as well and is usually not cause for alarm.

- **Next, you will go to baggage claim, collect your luggage, and pass through customs**, where you will use a short ticket to declare anything of value you are bringing into the country. Be absolutely honest about this.

**What to bring with you when going through immigration in the United States (this is advice we always give):**

3. **Passport expiration.** Ensure that your passport is valid for six months past the date of return travel.
4. **Food.** This may seem ridiculous, but throw away ALL food items when you disembark from the plane. Do not keep even crackers or an apple or you could be subject to hours of detainment by customs for importing organic matter.
5. **Bring everything *in print*.** In addition to your valid passport and your visa (if you are required to have one), at the border control station you may be asked for the following documents, so it's a good idea to have them with you:
  - A printed photocopy of your passport and your visa/ESTA
  - Your printed invitation letter for the conference
  - Printed page(s) of the online conference program where your name appears
  - Proof of your housing accommodations (print out your hotel booking information with dates of stay)
  - Printed proof of your return ticket (print out your airline booking confirmation) as proof that you do not intend to stay permanently in the U.S.
  - Proof of your profession, such as your business card, your conference itinerary, or even a printout of your university's web page showing your position and what classes you teach
  - Proof of your private health insurance (your insurance card), if applicable
  - If traveling with your children, you may also want to have a letter from their non-accompanying custodian/legal guardian, if applicable, especially if your surnames do not match. The letter should state that you have the other custodian's permission for them to leave the country; this is especially useful for very young children who can't verbally verify that they are traveling with their parent/custodian.

- If you have children but you are NOT traveling with them, it is helpful to have photos of your family as proof that you have a good reason to return to your home country.
- 4. You should have duplicates of any documentation you bring in print form. You never know when your phone or laptop battery will die.
- 5. Leave photocopies of your passport and visa/ESTA at home with a trusted loved one.

**New advice based on recent events:**

15. **Political opinions and privacy.** Please use your best personal judgment when determining what devices to bring with you on your trip and which apps those devices feature, with the knowledge that some travelers have been asked to unlock their phones and/or laptops so that agents can read their content.
16. **Gender.** At this time, while the U.S. State Department is not currently renewing or issuing U.S. passports with X gender markers, or issuing revised passports to those who wish to change their gender from the one assigned to them at birth, it is important to know that currently, as of the time of this article, U.S. immigration is NOT detaining passengers entering or exiting the U.S. based on having an X gender marker on their passport, nor for having a passport gender that may conflict with their gender presentation as observed by border officials. **I have personally confirmed this with my contact at the ACLU: they know of no cases of this being an issue so far.** This is how things stand right now, at the time of this article, and not a guarantee that things won't change between now and the time of the conference.
17. **Potential travel ban.** The administration has not yet released its potential travel ban for 43 countries, but if implemented, the ban could affect ICA25 attendees as well as international students residing in the U.S. It should not affect lawful permanent residents and green card holders, but as we have seen in recent weeks, those individuals may be under increased scrutiny. The travel ban is broken up into three groups:
  1. Full Visa Suspension: Ten countries-Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen-may face a complete halt on issuing U.S. visas. This suspension would prevent their citizens from traveling to the U.S. for any purpose, including tourism, business trips, or education.
  2. Partial Visa Suspension: A second category, including Belarus, Eritrea, Haiti, Laos, Myanmar, Pakistan, Russia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Turkmenistan, would experience partial visa restrictions. These

limitations might specifically affect tourist, student, and [immigrant visas](#), though certain exemptions may be available.

3. Probationary Period: The third group consists of 26 countries, notably Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Dominica, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, São Tomé and Príncipe, Vanuatu, and Zimbabwe. These countries would receive a 60-day period to address concerns regarding security and vetting processes. Failure to comply adequately could result in partial visa suspensions.

The Denver airport, as mentioned in Dr. Hanitzsch's recent article in the April newsletter, is ready for our conference and eager to welcome thousands of ICA scholars from around the globe. We do not anticipate any issues with your arrival or your stay in Denver. **Once you've arrived onsite, you will find that Denver is a very welcoming city in a very blue (politically liberal) state, and the area around the conference center—where our hotels are—is quite used to diverse visitors from all over the world.** If, however, the current political climate in the U.S. as a whole is too much to handle and you are not comfortable attending in person, you do have options. If you are already in a hybrid session (in the Centennial C or Centennial E ballroom), you can [contact the conference team](#) to let them know that you will be one of the remote presenters for the session. If you are not in a hybrid session, you can ask to present your paper in a full-remote, online session with other remote papers by filling out [this form](#) by 18 April. Whatever you choose, we look forward to seeing you (in person or online) in June.

Warmly,

Laura

[This is the link to the message sent February 27<sup>th</sup>](#), which itself contains a link to the form attendees can use to request a change to remote presentation.

[This is the message sent in mid-February](#) by the Executive Committee to ICA attendees and the ICA membership.

