

Court deportations take dramatic plunge

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By [Amanda Sakuma](#)

Immigration reform advocates have assailed President Obama as the nation's "deporter-in-chief" – a label he may soon shed as deportation rates continue to plummet.

Over the last five years, the number of deportation cases working through immigration courts dropped by 45%, [The New York Times](#) reported Wednesday. In that time, judges opened far fewer cases against foreigners and even ruled against deportations, according to figures from the [Justice Department](#), as the administration continues to ease back on aggressively removing immigrants living in the U.S. illegally.

Meanwhile, immigration reform continues to languish in Congress. While optimism that lawmakers can shape a bipartisan deal isn't completely out the window, House Republicans have tabled the issue amid infighting over how to accommodate the 11.7 million undocumented immigrants who already live in the United States. [Obama prodded Republicans](#) Wednesday, calling on leaders to come up with their own immigration plan.

"Simply put, it would boost our economy, strengthen our security, and live up to our most closely-held values as a society," Obama said in a statement. [Republicans didn't take kindly](#) to the message.

Early on in his presidency, Obama touted the Department of Homeland Security's success in aggressive deportation rates, appeasing Republicans who argued he was weak on immigration enforcement. The Department of Homeland Security later [unveiled a policy shift](#) to focus removal efforts on immigrants with a criminal history. The administration also bolstered enforcement along the southwest border to remove people crossing into the country illegally.

The number of deportation cases in the courts took the most dramatic dip after that policy shift in 2011. The Department of Homeland Security opened 187,677 deportation cases last year, a 26% decrease from five years earlier.

In addition, judges approved a greater share of cases allowing unauthorized immigrants to stay in the United States, a rate that is steadily growing. But the Obama administration still has a ways to go in outrunning its reputation on deportation. In 2013, the [administration deported 368,644 immigrants](#) – a 10% drop from the year before – inching toward the 2 million milestone of total number of people deported under Obama.

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