

Thousands of Immigration Court Cases Closed Since August

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A federal initiative that asked immigration authorities to focus their attention on immigrants convicted of crimes has resulted in the closure of more than 2,500 immigration cases nationwide between August and the end of March, according to a recent [analysis](#) of federal records.

Last August, the [White House asked](#) the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice to prioritize which immigration cases to prosecute, focusing on people who had been convicted of a crime, rather than going forward with deportation proceedings against those living in the country illegally but posing little threat to public or national safety, like illegal immigrants brought to the country as children and the spouses of active military personnel.

On Friday, the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University released a report showing that of the 2,609 cases closed, some 650 were terminated by a judge. In these cases, Immigration and Customs Enforcement agreed, via an exercise of prosecutorial discretion, that the government did not have valid grounds to deport the individual.

The remaining three quarters, 1,959 cases, were administratively closed by a judge. These administrative closures effectively placed the cases on hold without a final resolution, allowing individuals to stay in the country at least temporarily, according to TRAC.

The immigration court in Baltimore closed the most cases -- 230 since August. Courts in Los Angeles and New York City followed, closing 218 and 207 cases respectively.

Among courts with a significant backlog of cases, the immigration court in Detroit closed the greatest share of cases under the initiative. Nearly 6 percent of the 2,815 backlogged cases were closed, the report said. The immigration court in Portland, Ore., followed, closing nearly 5 percent of its backlog of 2,151 cases by the end of March.

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