



[U.S. Agrees To \\$350,000 Settlement In Conn. Immigration Raid Cases](#)

February 15, 2012

by [Corey Dade](#)

Advocates on all sides of the immigration debate are digesting the latest big, and perhaps historic, development: The U.S. government agreed to pay a \$350,000 settlement to 11 Connecticut men arrested in raids in 2007.

The plaintiffs claimed immigration agents violated their rights during the early morning raids, which snared nearly three dozen people.

Immigration experts, as well as the Associated Press, say the settlement appears to be the largest ever paid by the government to resolve a lawsuit over an immigration raid of a home. They say the deal also is the first to grant relief to the plaintiffs facing deportation.

Under the terms, plaintiffs have the option of delaying enforcement action against them for four years and then reapplying for permanent status; or terminating deportation proceedings altogether.

ICE says the settlement isn't an admission of liability on the part of the government.

Crystal Williams, executive director of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, calls the settlement figure "a statement." She says, "I've been in the field for 25 years, and I can't recall something like this before."

Apart from the dollar amount, Williams finds the government's unusual decision to settle, by itself, just as noteworthy. For many years, ICE raids have been criticized, by immigrant advocates and business owners (where many raids occur) alike, as excessive and unlawful.

"Too often these raids look more like a home invasion than an actual law enforcement action," Williams says. "What I hope comes of it is an understanding by ICE of what appropriate behavior in law enforcement really is."

[ICE's tactics](#) sometimes are considered a problem even by proponents of stricter enforcement of immigration laws.

"On the one hand, you don't have to kick down doors to stop illegal immigration," says Bob Dane, a spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, or FAIR, a pro-enforcement group. "But on the other hand, you can't have sanctuary policies that attract aliens. What we need is reasonable enforcement of rational laws, and a shared enforcement at both the federal and local levels."

Dane is referring to so-called sanctuary policies implemented in New Haven by Mayor John DeStefano Jr. He has become an outspoken opponent of federal programs and [state laws cracking down on illegal immigration](#). DeStefano, a Democrat, has issued identification cards regardless of residents' legal status, forbid police from asking people about their status, and more recently proposed extending voting rights to illegal immigrants.

The Associated Press reports on the details of the case:

"The men argued the agents drew their weapons, forced them out of bed and frightened young children in some of the homes. They claimed the federal agency was retaliating against New Haven, which has a reputation as a 'sanctuary city' for its embrace of illegal immigrants, and that they were targeted solely because of their Latino appearance.

"In June 2009, a federal judge ruled that agents violated the constitutional rights of four immigrants in the raids. The judge said the ICE agents went into the immigrants' homes without warrants, probable cause or their consent, and he put a stop to deportation proceedings against the four defendants, whose names were not released."

Plaintiffs and their supporters have long pointed to the fact that the raids occurred in a predominantly Latino neighborhood one day after DeStefano began offering the IDs. ICE has denied accusations that the raids came in retaliation.