

What Does Obama Administration Immigration-Enforcement Review Mean For Deportation Policy?

By [David Iaconangelo](#) | Mar 17 2014, 12:08PM EDT

The White House announced last Thursday that President Barack Obama had ordered Homeland Security head Jeh Johnson to carry out a [review](#) of the agency's deportation policies "to see how it can conduct enforcement more humanely within the confines of the law." On Friday, [according to the Associated Press](#), Obama convened 17 labor and immigrant advocates at the White House to discuss administration deportation policies -- which by next month could see 2 million people deported over the president's time in office -- and possible strategies for getting a comprehensive immigration reform passed.

Frank Sharry, executive director of America's Voice, the nation's largest immigrant-advocacy group, told the AP after the meeting, "The president displayed a great deal of sympathy for the families affected by the deportation machinery." He added, "There was less agreement on when and what should be done about it by the president." He said he had urged the president to take action where House Republicans have refused to act legislatively. "The president has the ability to step into the vacuum created by the House Republican inaction to protect millions of people who are low priority, use his executive authority in an expansive way."

That same day, the Los Angeles Times [reported](#) that officials with Homeland Security were considering two policy changes. The first could slow or suspend deportations of noncitizens who have only been prosecuted for immigration violations. That group makes up a significant percentage of those deportees whom Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) describes as "criminals" -- according to Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse ([TRAC](#)), over 50 percent of all individuals placed in deportation proceedings in 2013 were charged with "entry without inspection." Another 31 percent faced other immigration-related charges. [Just under half](#) were eventually deported.

The second change would reportedly scale back [Secure Communities](#) -- a program running in 44 states by which participating local jails share fingerprint data with immigration agencies, which can then request police keep immigrants detained for an extra 48 hours so that agents can come question them. The proposed change would allow immigration authorities to put out that "detainer" request to local cops only if the detainee in question had a criminal record. [A similar law](#) limiting local police's right to honor detainer requests to those who had a record of certain serious crimes [passed](#) in October in California. [TRAC reported](#) that same month that fewer than one in nine people targeted by immigration detainers had a record of serious crime, and over 60 percent had no convictions of any sort.

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