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How Significant Is the Departure of Three Million Illegal Aliens?

Perspective either clouds or clarifies truth. Like a mountain viewed from a distance, the size and significance of things may seem minimal until closer inspection reveals actual scale and impact. Such is the case with the recent removal of illegal aliens from the United States.

On January 20 the Department of Homeland Security [announced](#), “In President Trump’s first year back in office, nearly three million illegal aliens have left the U.S. because of the Trump administration’s crackdown on illegal immigration, including an estimated 2.2 million self-deportations and more than 675,000 deportations.”



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Naturally, those on the Left protest that is three million too many, though they sure didn’t think so when that same number of illegal aliens were *entering* the country each year under President Biden. Conversely, some on the Right think it’s not nearly enough — understandable given their impatience after watching decades of surging illegal immigration and declining enforcement.

Granted, there are a whopping [18.6](#) million illegal aliens living in the United States, meaning ICE has a staggering amount of work left to do, further complicated by operating in an increasingly risky anti-ICE environment. Thus, it begs the question of just how significant the removals to date really are.

The answer is very significant, not only due to the volume of those already removed, but especially in terms of how that reduces taxpayer burdens.

For perspective of the size, ponder the fact that three million is equivalent to the combined illegal alien population existing in 34 smaller and medium-sized states and the District of Columbia. It is also equal to the total number of illegal aliens living in California, and just shy of the combined total number of them living in New York and Florida.

The scale of recent removals will soon have a dramatic impact on costs. FAIR’s research reveals that 18.6 million illegal aliens — and their U.S.-born children — cost Americans [\\$150.7](#) billion annually (net after accounting for their tax contributions, minimal as they are). Based on simple pro rata subtraction, three million fewer illegal aliens in the U.S. represents a savings of \$24.3 billion.

But there’s more. Out-year costs have been substantially reduced. Without removal — or self-deportation — these three million illegal aliens would have remained in the country, thus imposing compounding costs for taxpayers year after year. If the three million illegal aliens who were removed or left voluntarily remained in the United States for another 10 years (which they would without legal consequences for doing so) the cumulative taxpayer burden would be \$243 billion by 2034 — and likely much higher when adjusted for inflation.



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Consequently, no one could blame President Trump for taking a victory lap. Under his direction, illegal immigration enforcement efforts have, thus far, saved American taxpayers billions.

Financially, three million fewer illegal aliens is indeed significant, and the Trump administration is off to a good start delivering on campaign promises and serving the interests of U.S. taxpayer.

Of course, more work remains. Recent deportations are just the tip of the ICE-berg. To-date removals represent a scant 16 percent of the 18.6 million illegal aliens living in the United States. Reducing that population will involve ongoing field work by ICE, expanding pressure on sanctuary jurisdictions to comply with the law so that illegal aliens are transferred to federal custody, and continuing to encourage illegal aliens to voluntarily depart before ICE catches up with them. As the Trump administration moves into this second phase of removal operations, conducting vigorous worksite enforcement and targeting visa overstays will prove critical to successfully expanding deportations.

While alleviating taxpayer burdens is a major benefit of the recent immigration enforcement, other valuable objectives are achieved when those who have no legal right to reside in the country are removed or voluntarily leave. To that point, the recent departures represent an important part of a multi-pronged strategy by the Trump administration to reverse Biden-era lawlessness, create deterrence to prevent future illegal entries, preserve national sovereignty, enhance public safety, and reinstate America's rule of law — none of which we'd dare attach a price tag to.

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