



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 1, 2014

Obama Administration Releases 68,000 Illegal Immigrant Criminals

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials released 67,879 illegal immigrants with criminal convictions in 2013 and made no move to deport them. ICE is part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

This information was made available on March 31 by the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that collected the information from ICE's "Weekly Departures and Detention Report" for the end of fiscal year 2013. The CIS obtained a copy of the report through a lawsuit.



CIS released its findings in a document written by former State Department foreign service officer Jessica Vaughan titled, "Catch and Release: Interior Immigration enforcement in 2013."

The ICE document showed that its agents encountered 193,357 illegal immigrants with criminal convictions last year, but issued charging documents for only 125,478. As noted above, 67,879 charged and/or convicted criminals were released.

"ICE released 68,000 criminal aliens in 2013, or 35 percent of the criminal aliens encountered by officers. The vast majority of these releases occurred because of the Obama administration's prosecutorial discretion policies," Vaughan wrote in a memo that drew from the ICE document. She noted that ICE classifies illegal immigrants as criminal if they have been convicted of a crime, excluding traffic offenses.

Vaughan noted further: "The Obama administration's deliberate obstruction of immigration enforcement, in which tens of thousands of criminal aliens are released instead of removed, is threatening the well-being of American communities."

Fox News reported that Immigration and Customs Enforcement accused CIS of distorting the numbers, claiming that some of the convictions might represent minor offenses. The agency also took credit for deporting a total of 216,000 "convicted criminals" in 2013.

"ICE is focused on the removal of criminal aliens," Fox quoted an ICE spokeswoman. "The percentage of criminals removed continues to rise. Nearly 60 percent of ICE's total removals had been previously convicted of a criminal offense, and that number rises to 82 percent for individuals removed from the interior of the U.S. The removal of criminal individuals is and will remain ICE's highest priority."

Fox also reported that earlier this month, a DHS spokesman said the internal review of immigration enforcement is a process that is "ongoing" and will be done "expeditiously."

"Since taking office, [Jeh Johnson] the secretary [of Homeland Security] has made clear that he shares the president's commitment of enforcing our immigration laws effectively and sensibly, in line with our



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values,” the spokesman said. “As part of that effort he has been taking a hard look at these tough issues, meeting with a range of stakeholders and employees and already has been assessing if there are areas where we can further align our enforcement policies with our goal of sound law enforcement practice that prioritizes public safety.”

The CIS report said factors such as “family relationships, political considerations, or attention from advocacy groups” are likely helping to “trump criminal convictions as a factor leading to deportation.”

An article at [Investors.com](#) (*Investor’s Business Daily*) about the widespread release of convicted illegal immigrants noted wryly:

So much for President Obama’s claim last June that “today, deportation of criminals is at its highest level ever” because “we focused our enforcement efforts on criminals who are here illegally and who are endangering our communities.”

CIS has charged that the Obama administration has manipulated statistics by changing how it counts the number of deportations in order to hide the decline. Jessica Vaughan said that Homeland Security plays a statistical shell game of “removals” vs. “returns” and that if you actually “count the number of people sent out of the country, it’s not even close to a record. It’s the lowest since the 1970s.”

The number of returns in 2012 was 229,968, down from 1.6 million returns in 2000, the last full year of the Clinton administration.

Homeland Security defines a “return” — which is how deportations were previously measured — as “the confirmed movement of an inadmissible or deportable alien out of the United States not based on an order of removal.”

Senator Jeff Session (R-Ala.) issued a statement on March 31 in response to the release of the statistics that read, in part:

The preponderance of the evidence demonstrates that immigration enforcement in America has collapsed. Even those with criminal convictions are being released. DHS is a department in crisis. Secretary Johnson must reject the President’s demands to weaken enforcement further and tell him that his duty, and his officers’ duty, is to enforce the law—not break it....

American citizens have a legal and moral right to the protections our immigration laws afford—at the border, the interior and the workplace. The Administration has stripped these protections and adopted a government policy that encourages new arrivals to enter illegally or overstay visas by advertising immunity from future enforcement....

While Senator Sessions hit the nail on the head regarding the Obama administration’s lax immigration enforcement, there was a certain partisanship in his comments: “Unfortunately, Congressional Democrats continue to empower this lawlessness. Republicans must work to end it.”

Democrats have unquestionably led the charge on weakening enforcement of our immigration laws, but it is not difficult to find examples of Republican support for what is effectively amnesty for illegal immigrants. On January 30, *The Hill* reported that Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) blasted his Republican colleagues in the House for crafting an immigration plan that he denounced as “amnesty.”

“I think it would be a mistake if House Republicans were to support amnesty for those here illegally,” he said when asked about a proposal to be included in the House Republicans’ immigration principles statement.



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“In my view we need to secure the borders, we need to stop illegal immigration,” Cruz said during a *Bloomberg News* breakfast. “And we need to improve and streamline legal immigration.”

Senator John McCain, the GOP’s presidential nominee in 2008, said in an address before the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on March 27 that if comprehensive immigration reform passes, he would “make sure it is forever called the Edward M. Kennedy immigration bill.” Fox News reported that McCain told the group he vowed to fight for amnesty as long as he is a breathing United States senator.

McCain and Kennedy tried to pass their namesake amnesty bill last decade, along with President George W. Bush. Conservatives halted the measure because it would have reduced the wages of American workers while not solving the illegal immigration problem.

Breitbart noted in a report about McCain’s statements that among the speakers throughout the week at Hispanic Chamber of Commerce events were Rep. Paul Ryan (R-Wis.), who said that amnesty legislation was inevitable, and Vice President Joe Biden, who stated that he believed illegal immigrants were “already American citizens.”

A report in the Examiner.com last June 26 noted that a group of Arizona citizens had organized a movement to recall both senators McCain and Jeff Flake because they had both voted to advance the passage of the “Gang of Eight” bill that included amnesty. In addition to McCain and Flake, the Gang of Eight also included Republican senators Marco Rubio and Lindsey Graham.

The Tea Party has compiled a list of Republican senators it says have “voted for amnesty over border security and interior immigration law enforcement.”

Those on the list include:

- Sen. Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire
- Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee
- Sen. Jeff Chiesa of New Jersey
- Sen. Susan Collins of Maine
- Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee
- Sen. Jeff Flake of Arizona
- Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina
- Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah
- Sen. Dean Heller of Nevada
- Sen. John Hoeven of North Dakota
- Sen. Mark Kirk of Illinois
- Sen. John McCain of Arizona
- Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska
- Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida

Should a member of the GOP be elected to the presidency in 2016, he or she might enforce immigration law more conscientiously than President Obama, but such enforcement cannot be any better than the law itself. So long as Republicans in Congress are willing to join Democrats in voting for amnesty,



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illegal immigration will not be curbed.



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