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Immigration Update: Maximizing Public Safety and Better Focusing Resources

Posted by **Cecilia Muñoz** on August 18, 2011 at 02:00 PM EDT

Ed. Note: Cecilia Muñoz will be answering your questions on today's announcement during Office Hours on Twitter. Use the hashtag #whchat to ask questions, then join us @whitehouse at 4:15 pm EDT to follow the question and answer session.

President Obama is deeply committed to fixing our immigration laws and has been aggressively searching for partners in Congress who are willing to work with him to pass a new law. As he focuses on building a new 21st century immigration system that meets our nation's economic and security needs, the President has a responsibility to enforce the existing laws in a smart and effective manner. This means making decisions that best focus the resources that Congress gives the Executive Branch to do this work. There are more than 10 million people who are in the U.S. illegally; it's clear that we can't deport such a large number. So the Administration has developed a strategy to make sure we use those resources in a way that puts public safety and national security first. If you were running a law enforcement agency anywhere in the world, you would target those who pose the greatest harm before those who do not. Our immigration enforcement work is focused the same way.

Under the President's direction, for the first time ever the Department of Homeland Security has prioritized the removal of people who have been convicted of crimes in the United States. And they have succeeded; in 2010 DHS removed 79,000 more people who had been convicted of a crime compared to 2008. Today, they announced that they are strengthening their ability to target criminals even further by making sure they are not focusing our resources on deporting people who are low priorities for deportation. This includes individuals such as young people who were brought to this country as small children, and who know no other home. It also includes individuals such as military veterans and the spouses of active-duty military personnel. It makes no sense to spend our enforcement resources on these low-priority cases when they could be used with more impact on others, including individuals who have been convicted of serious crimes.

So DHS, along with the Department of Justice, will be reviewing the current deportation caseload to clear out low-priority cases on a case-by-case basis and make more room to deport people who have been convicted of crimes or pose a security risk. And they will take steps to keep low-priority cases out of the deportation pipeline in the first place. They will be applying [common sense guidelines](#) to make these decisions, like a person's ties and contributions to the community, their family relationships and military service record. In the end, this means more immigration enforcement pressure where it counts the most, and less where it doesn't – that's the smartest way to follow the law while we stay focused on working with the Congress to fix it.

Cecilia Muñoz is White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs

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