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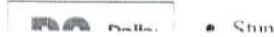
Dallas Deportation Orders Down, But Will Obama's Policy Shift Stick?

By Brantley Hargrove Thu., Feb. 9 2012 at 11:04 AM Categories: Immigration

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In Dallas and across the country, the astronomical number of deportation orders issued by immigration courts is at last beginning to fall. President Obama's new strategy focuses on intelligent enforcement and prosecutorial discretion. Translated: We'll show bad guys the door, but the undocumented student brought here as a child can probably stay.



The June 2011 gear-shift in policy was a big one for an administration that deported folks at double the rate of its predecessor. It renewed hope among undocumented immigrants seeking only to make a living, and it prompted cheers from advocates, who believe it signals a more humane, pragmatic turn by the Obama Administration.

Problem is, it took months to see any sign that it was actually happening.

But according to Syracuse's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, the first quarter of 2012 saw a six-percent drop in the number of removal orders nationwide. Based on those numbers, they're projecting a 21-percent drop in the number of deportation orders originating from Dallas.

"In my practice, I find that it took some months for the Morton memo to really have an impact. I think ICE was reluctant at first," immigration attorney Furqan Sunny Azhar tells Unfair Park. "Eventually enforcement and removal operations, as well as the Office of Chief Counsel, began to take the Morton memo a little more seriously, and they reevaluated most of the cases for prosecutorial discretion."

Azhar's clients are a testament to that. One has lived in this country for years, but was kicked into removal proceedings because his permanent residency application was denied. He qualified for prosecutorial discretion because he has no criminal record and his citizen daughter was nearly 21 -- mere months from being able to petition for an immediate relative visa for her father.

Another was a high school student on the honor roll who was brought to this country when she was 9. Her sister had an outstanding removal order, and when fugitive operations

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came looking for her, they nabbed the student too. In neither case will Azhar's clients receive permanent residency. They simply won't have the feds on their heels.

Much uncertainty remains in how the new policy is implemented from court to court. Another immigration attorney, Michael Canton, worries that the drop in deportations is nothing but a short-lived blip. "I wouldn't be surprised if the numbers have gone down temporarily as a result of the memo," he says. "To me, if it has gone down, it's only short term because they're not entertaining any more requests for prosecutorial discretion."

Canton says prosecutors were only taking candidates from mid-November to January 13. "They're kind of doing an audit to see the effect that the memo had," Canton says. "They may implement it again judging on how effective it is. This is just in Dallas."

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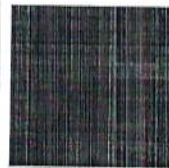


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