



Trump and immigration: Separating truth from fiction | Opinion

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The most notable public perception of President Donald Trump and immigration policy has manifested in daily stories about deportations.

These heartbreaking pieces -- parents detained and removed from their kids; husbands and wives permanently separated; and adults returned to nations where they have not lived since childhood -- have served to humanize a crisis that went on long before the Trump administration.

However, the glaring difference is the lack of prosecutorial discretion under Trump. The reason for the seemingly unending news of deportations has to do with the individuals removed from the United States.

For many years Immigration and Customs Enforcement followed guidelines to determine who should stay and who should go. A policy of discretion made sense, based on humanitarian factors as well as proper use of government resources.

Just as the Trump administration ramps up caseloads, it's canceling training for judges.

Now, ICE is working with a virtual zero tolerance policy when handling cases of foreign nationals previously ordered deported but who have reasonable arguments to stay in the United States.

In addition to inhuman treatment of noncriminals with close ties to America over long periods, Trump's Department of Homeland Security is also acting in a manner that fails to exact justice.

This numbers game looks good to people who oppose immigration. It also sounds right to them, to throw immigrants out.

However, the reality is abandoning prosecutorial discretion creates a mess. Now we have more than 600,000 immigrants awaiting trial. ICE adds more daily.

Imagine a criminal justice system with no plea bargains. This is your Immigration Court nationwide.

In Chicago the average wait time for a trial is over 1000 days. Here in New Jersey we are looking at more than two years, easily. My firm has certain clients in litigation for more than a decade. The state of Texas has 100,000 pending cases in its immigration courts.

Ironically, Trump is deporting fewer immigrants than did President Barack Obama.

From January to June 2016, Obama's Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported 70,603 criminals. In the same timeframe in 2017, Trump's "deportation force" removed 61,370.

All of the constant anti-immigrant rhetoric from Trump is particularly foolish considering his record as a businessman with a reliance on foreign labor.

Even now Mar-a-Lago resort and the Trump National Golf Club, both in Florida, as well as his golf club in Bedminster, sponsor immigrants to work on H-2B visas. These people hail from the very same countries where the President deports so many albeit less than Obama.

Both sides of the aisle have massive blind spots when it comes to immigration. We need to be clear about the the benefits but also the challenges immigration presents.

Moreover, the Trump-supported RAISE Act is a bad piece of legislation that distorts the impact of immigration on the American economy. As the nonpartisan and independent CATO Institute just pointed out in a brand new study, "Immigration's long-run relative wage impact on native-born American workers is close to zero."

Earlier this year, former Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly, now White House chief of staff, told Congress, "You've got to solve this problem," referencing the approximately one million immigrants who currently hold temporary protected status and deferred action for childhood arrivals.

Kelly added that he did not wish to deport this group.

Back in January Trump announced that an immigration plan would be delivered by April, with "a lot of heart."

We're still waiting.