



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 3, 2014 CONTACT: [Kathryn Rexrode](#) or [Jessica Collins](#), (202) 225-3951

Collateral Damage: President's Unilateral Actions Make Our Communities Less Safe
Part 3 of a series looking at the consequences of President Obama's unilateral immigration actions

Washington, D.C. – President Obama recently announced unilateral changes to our immigration system. What he didn't announce is that many of these changes make our communities less safe. President Obama claims he is taking executive action to prioritize immigration enforcement to focus on criminal aliens, yet he is scrapping a congressionally-mandated tool that identifies criminal aliens booked in jails across the United States so that federal law enforcement officials can prioritize their removal. Secure Communities, created in 2008, is a simple and successful program to identify criminal aliens once arrested and jailed. It protects Americans from public safety threats and those who could be a danger to their communities.

The Facts About Secure Communities:

- ✓ ***Congressionally-mandated:*** In 2008, U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement (ICE) launched Secure Communities following the [enactment of a law](#) requiring the agency to “improve and modernize efforts to identify aliens convicted of a crime, sentenced to imprisonment, and who may be deportable, and remove them from the United States, once they are judged deportable.”
- ✓ ***Simple to use:*** As the Department of Homeland Security has [said](#) on numerous occasions, Secure Communities simply “uses an already-existing federal-information sharing partnership between ICE and the Federal Bureau of Investigation that helps to identify criminal aliens” so that ICE can take enforcement action.
- ✓ ***Successful in meeting its mission:*** As of August 2014, the Administration indicated that since the program's initial activation in Harris County, Texas, over 375,000 aliens and 121,000 Level 1– who the Obama Administration deems the “worst of the worst” – convicted criminal aliens were removed as a result of Secure Communities.
- ✓ ***Already rolled out nation-wide:*** Since its inception in 2008 with 14 jurisdictions, Secure Communities was expanded to all 3,181 jurisdictions within 50 states, the District of Columbia, and five U.S. Territories. Full implementation was completed on January 22, 2013.

Instead of continuing to utilize this successful, existing system that is required and appropriated by Congress, the Obama Administration will implement a new, untested program called the “Priorities Enforcement Program.”

The Facts About the Administration's “Priorities Enforcement Program”:

- ✓ ***Turns a blind eye to most unlawful immigrants:*** Obama Administration officials claim that the new “Priorities Enforcement Program” will continue to rely on biometric data but ICE will only be able to seek to transfer an alien in the custody of state and local law enforcement through the new program when the alien has been convicted of certain, but not all, of the offenses listed in the Administration’s new, so-called immigration enforcement “priorities.”
- ✓ ***Ignores the Administration’s own priorities:*** The Obama Administration ignores some of its own criminal priorities for the purposes of processing for removal under the “Priorities Enforcement Program.” As a result of this loophole, recent border crossers who came to the United States after January 1, 2014, those who overstayed the terms of their visas, and fugitives of the law are not required to be processed for removal – even though the Obama Administration deems them as priorities.
- ✓ ***Authorizes sanctuary city policies:*** Not only does the Obama Administration end the Secure Communities program as we know it, it also ends ICE detainers, meaning the ability to pick up and process removable aliens encountered by law enforcement, in most circumstances. In place of detainers, ICE will issue “requests for notification” to state and local law enforcement regarding who is in their custody. This effectively leaves states and localities responsible regarding the decision of immigration enforcement: they can refuse to comply with the requests for notification should they choose to do so.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-Va.) stated the following on the Obama Administration’s decision to gut Secure Communities:

“President Obama seems to be ending Secure Communities for one reason only: it works. Secure Communities has a proven track record of identifying dangerous criminal aliens booked in jails across the United States so that they can be removed from the United States and no longer threaten our communities. By ending this successful program and allowing entire categories of criminal aliens to remain in the United States, President Obama is knowingly placing Americans in danger.”

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