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### In the Debate Over Immigration and Deportations, the Facts Matter

Posted by Cecilia Muñoz on August 16, 2011 at 05:35 PM EDT

As too often happens in the debate over immigration, anger and heated rhetoric from all sides dominate while the facts tend to get lost along the way. So it's important to set the record straight. Fixing the broken immigration system so that it meets America's economic and security needs has been and continues to be a priority for President Obama. The President has laid out a clear, detailed [blueprint for reform](#), but the only way to do what's necessary is for Congress to act and pass bipartisan legislation the President can sign into law. Failing to act simply perpetuates a broken system. Unfortunately, as the President has said, he needs a dance partner across the aisle to move legislation forward, and so far the floor is empty.

While the President continues to work every day to fix what's broken about our immigration system, he has also been clear that the executive branch has a responsibility to enforce the law, and to do it in a way which is both vigorous and smart. So while legislation is pending, this Administration has focused on improving our immigration system by making enforcement smarter and more effective. The fact is, Congressional funding for immigration enforcement and deportations has been on the rise for the past decade. For the first time ever, those resources are being used in a strategic and targeted way to ensure we're maximizing public safety.

Under the President's direction, the Department of Homeland Security for the first time ever has prioritized the removal of people who have been convicted of crimes in the United States. The [Secure Communities Program](#), which relies on a federal information sharing program that utilizes FBI fingerprint checks conducted by law enforcement officials as they fight crime in their communities, is central to this strategy. It is the primary reason that the deportation statistics show a dramatic increase in the number of criminals deported from the United States. The results of this strategy are striking:

- There was a greater than 70% increase in the deportation of those with criminal records from FY2008 to FY2010, and a decrease of those without criminal records.
- Today more than half of all removals are people with criminal records.
- And among those removed who had no criminal records, more than two thirds were either apprehended as they crossed the border, were recent arrivals, or were repeat violators of immigration law, meaning that they had previously been deported.

Those statistics matter. While we have more work to do, the statistics demonstrate that the strategy DHS put in place is working. At the same time, the Administration has also been open and receptive to feedback from communities across the country. On June 17, DHS announced important changes to the Secure Communities

Program, including creating an ongoing review of the program so that DHS can assess its effectiveness, and taking care to protect witnesses or victims of crimes. Nothing can make up for the lack of comprehensive reform, but the facts show this has been a good strategy we can be proud of.

The Secure Communities Program is a powerful tool to keep the government's immigration enforcement resources focused where they belong – on those who fit within DHS's highest enforcement priorities, such as those who have committed crimes in the United States.

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