Data Center Releases Tool That Maps Immigration Court Cases

By **Allissa Wickham**

Law360, New York (August 8, 2017, 10:18 PM EDT) -- A data research center has created a new "web mapping" tool that lets people see the number of individuals living in each state or community who have cases in immigration court, the center announced Monday, with Houston and Queens leading the pack when it comes to local communities.

The Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a data research center at Syracuse University, released the tool, which allows users to see how many immigration court cases are pending in each state. Users can also zoom in on states for a more local overview, as the map displays the number of individuals in immigration court based on address.

"Using this new interactive web tool, the location of individuals involved in Immigration Court cases can be displayed based upon each individual's recorded home address," TRAC noted. "Where the individual is detained, the address shown may be that of the detention facility where the individual is being held."

Among the notable statistics the group uncovered was that many communities have a "relatively small" number of people with ongoing cases, noting that about half of the counties in America have "no more than 25 residents" with active "pending matters."

However, TRAC also listed the top 100 communities with the biggest number of active immigration cases, based on the residence of the individuals, and Houston topped the list with 33,360. The Queens borough of New York came in second with 25,420 pending cases, followed by Brooklyn with about 15,000 and Los Angeles with about 14,300.

The new tool comes as immigration courts deal with extensive backlogs.

According to records obtained by the Transactions Records Access Clearinghouse through Freedom of Information Act requests, there were 610,524 pending cases in the immigration courts as of June 30, up from 598,943 at the end of May.

The TRAC report also identified a 9.3 percent drop in final dispositions issued in immigration court cases since President Donald Trump took office, decreasing from 84,956 over a five-month period last year to 77,085 during the same window this year.

In May, the White House proposed tackling the backlog by hiring 75 more immigration judges and about 375 additional immigration-related employees. The director of the Executive Office for Immigration Review, James McHenry, said in June after he hired 11 new immigration judges that he intended to "maximiz[e] the use and effectiveness of current adjudicatory capacity" as well as identify ways to "enhance immigration judge productivity without compromising due process."

The country's top immigration judge has also warned immigration courts not to routinely allow for delays in cases, otherwise known as continuances, unless there's a good reason.

--Editing by Breda Lund.