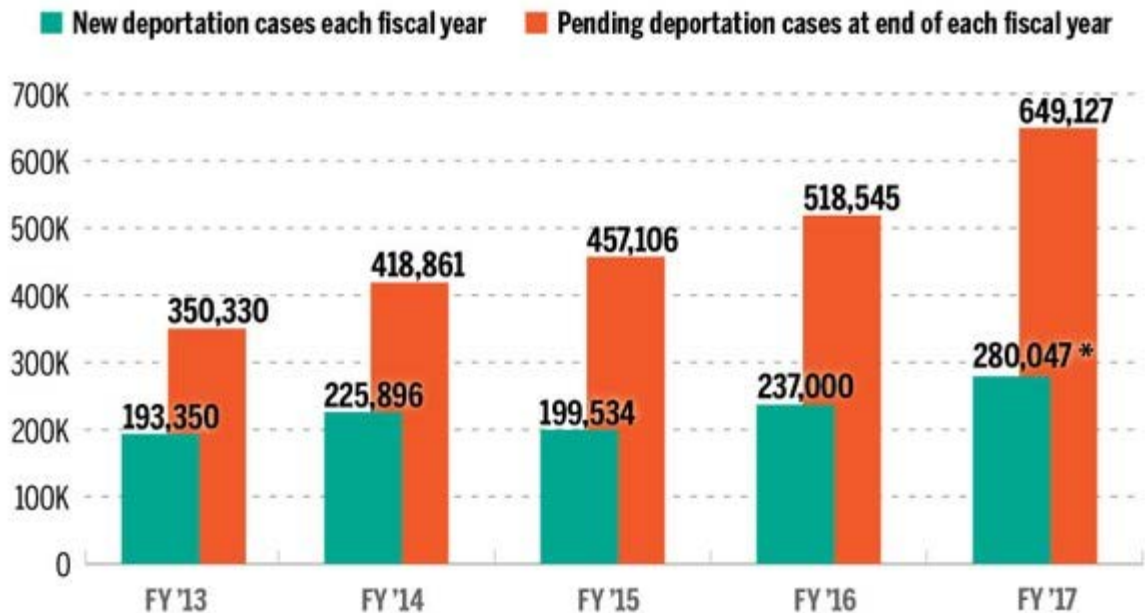


The U.S. immigration crackdown needs some rethinking and here's why

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U.S. IMMIGRATION COURTS



Source: U.S. Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review

*Through August 31

By The Ann Arbor News Editorial Board

There's room for debate when it comes to the question of should immigrants be allowed to live in the United States if they are here without permission, or with permission but with criminal convictions.

Some say our country was built on immigration and the promise of a haven for those tired, poor, and huddled masses yearning to breathe free. That those in search of sanctuary tend to add positives to our society and our economy. That they've been doing so for decades and do so today.

Others say there's reason to deport those who haven't followed immigration rules. That they are a problem when it comes to keeping track of criminal activity and that there are too many people flooding across borders without any kind of order under law.

A series of reports by The Ann Arbor News and MLive.com this week shows there are elements of truth to both arguments. That's why the issue is so contentious when something happens to bring it into the spotlight. An immigration crackdown underway in the United States has done just that. It was triggered by the election of President Donald Trump and his call for deporting more people, building a wall between the United States and Mexico and starting travel restrictions to and from certain countries. The national debate will continue in 2018 as issues such as DACA take center stage.

As The News series reveals, the push to enforce immigration law is having consequences. It's creating a logjam in our immigration courts. The Detroit court has seen its caseload swell even as the number of immigration judges has declined. The result is that those facing deportation hearings can wait for years to have their day in court. That takes an emotional toll on hundreds of families who live with the uncertainty during that time. Many of those families are of mixed nationality, where one parent and their children are U.S. citizens but the other parent is not.

Surely the United States must make the immigration court system more efficient if it plans to keep its ramped up enforcement crackdown going. We pride our nation on a legal system that promises a right to a speedy trial, and we aren't living up to that promise.

As an intermediate step, let's focus on priority cases and not those who've lived here for years without a criminal background. The number of non-criminal immigrants arrested by authorities in Michigan and Ohio more than doubled in 2017. The focus has and should be on criminals who break U.S. law and commit serious offenses. In those cases, a speedy hearing in immigration court is the best way to send them out of the country.



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