

Immigrants waiting years for their day in court; 26,000 cases pending in SA

By Michael Locklear, Fox San Antonio Wednesday, November 2nd 2016



San Antonio Immigration Court (Photo: Sinclair Broadcast Group)

SAN ANTONIO – About 26,000 immigration cases are pending in San Antonio, and lawyers say their clients are waiting years for their day in court.

“They want to move on with their lives,” said Aaron Haas, immigration attorney. “They want to get these cases resolved. Many of them have lived here a long time. Many of them are asking for asylum because they were having problems in their home country, and they’re afraid to go back to their home country.”

The problem is the government’s priority on deporting families and children, according to attorney Linda Brandmiller. (The idea was to send a message to women and children from Central America who were crossing the border by the tens of thousands.) Adults have been pushed to the back of the line.

“The backlog is a result of not applying the standard of ‘first in, first out,’” she said, “so it has nothing to do with when you got here, what your remedy is, when you have a court hearing.”

Brandmiller says some immigrants must wait until 2019 or 2020 for a hearing.

The U.S. Department of Justice office that administers the immigration court system said the following in a statement:

With a continued, robust hiring initiative and an agency high of 294 immigration judges, the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) is working to become better poised to address this increasing caseload. EOIR is now authorized 374 immigration judge positions, and the agency is steadily climbing closer to that number, thereby augmenting adjudicatory capacity and working to reduce the pending caseload and wait times for those in proceedings. EOIR currently has 95 immigration judge candidates at various stages of the hiring process. If EOIR receives the additional 25 immigration judges referenced in the House Appropriations Committee Bill, EOIR will be authorized 399 immigration judge positions.

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