



[Immigrant Students Spared As Deportations Rise](#)

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A recent article in the [Dallas Morning News](#) discussed the relatively "hands-off" deportation policy regarding students who are in the country illegally, but only because their parents brought them here as young children. In other words, these students did not choose to break the law and enter the U.S. illegally of their own will. Here are excerpts from the article:

The Obama administration, while deporting a record number of immigrants convicted of crimes, is sparing one group of illegal immigrants from expulsion: students who came to the U.S. without papers when they were children.

The students who have been allowed to remain are among more than 700,000 illegal immigrants who would be eligible for legal status under the Dream Act, a bill before Congress specifically for high school graduates who came to the U.S. before they were 16.

Department of Homeland Security officials said they had made no formal change of policy to permit those students to stay. But they said they had other, more pressing deportation priorities.

"In a world of limited resources, our time is better spent on someone who is here unlawfully and is committing crimes in the neighborhood," John Morton, the head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said in an interview. "As opposed to someone who came to this country as a juvenile and spent the vast majority of their life here."

Still, Republicans say the authorities should pursue all immigrants who are here illegally.

The administration is debating how to handle immigration now that the chances for a broad overhaul that President Barack Obama supports have faded for this year.

An internal Homeland Security memorandum, released last month by Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa, set off a furor among his fellow Republicans because it showed immigration officials weighing steps they could take without congressional approval to give legal status to some illegal immigrants – including suspending deportations of students.

But a White House official said that the administration had decided against the moratorium, preferring to push for the student bill.

"Legislation does far more for Dream Act students than deferring deportations would, in that it puts them on a path to citizenship," said the official, who requested anonymity to discuss an internal policy debate.

Instead of a general moratorium, immigration authorities appear to be acting case by case to hold up deportations of young immigrants.

The vast majority of students who are illegal immigrants have no criminal records, and they would have to keep it that way to qualify to become legal under the Dream Act. To meet its terms, immigrants must also have graduated from high school and lived in the U.S. for at least five years, and they must complete two years of college or military service.

Lawmakers from both parties say the student bill draws wider support than the broader overhaul – but still not enough to make it likely to pass before the election.

Many young immigrants were brought to the U.S. illegally as small children by their parents. Often they only learn of their illegal status years later, when they are old enough to apply for a driver's license or to attend college.