



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on April 15, 2026

Trump DOJ Drops 23,000 Criminal Investigations to Prioritize Immigration Enforcement

In the first six months of President Donald Trump's second term, the Department of Justice under Attorney General Pam Bondi quietly declined more than 23,000 criminal cases, according to a [ProPublica analysis](#) of two decades of DOJ data. The agency abandoned hundreds of investigations into terrorism, white-collar crime, drug trafficking, and other offenses while ramping up [immigration prosecutions](#) to roughly 32,000 new cases — nearly triple the pace under Joe Biden's administration and 15 percent higher than Trump's first term. Officials described the shift as a necessary reallocation of resources to address court congestion caused by record border encounters and deportation proceedings.



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Immigration as a Political Tool

This is not the first time immigration has been leveraged for broader political and fiscal ends. In the decades before the Civil War, mass migration was used as a political tool of the North. The United States nearly doubled in population between 1820 and 1850, with the vast majority of immigrants flowing toward Northern states. Because the constitutional apportionment of House seats (and thus Electoral College votes) counted all persons — including non-citizens — the North gained disproportionate representation. That political edge enabled the North to pass legislation that resulted in [looting the South with oppressive taxation](#). (Taxes were levied against Southern states that were not levied against Northern states, with the result that, right before the Civil War, 80 percent of the funds in the U.S. Treasury had been siphoned out of the South.) Historians note this revenue imbalance exacerbated sectional tensions leading to secession.

Immigration and the Census

Today, the mechanism echoes in census-driven apportionment. The 14th Amendment requires counting the “whole number of persons” in each state. Non-citizens, including those present illegally, are included, redistributing House seats toward states with large immigrant populations — often Democratic strongholds such as California and New York. Analyses by the [Center for Immigration Studies](#) estimate immigration (legal and illegal) shifted as many as 17 seats and Electoral College votes in the 2020 census, with a net gain for blue states in some models. Republican-led efforts to exclude non-citizens from apportionment have repeatedly failed in Congress.

The current DOJ policy fits this longer pattern. By citing docket-overload from migration surges, the administration justifies shelving thousands of non-immigration probes. Supporters call it pragmatic



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prioritization of border security. Critics counter that it functions as a *de facto* corruption shield: Federal resources appear devoted to enforcement, satisfying the political base, while overall deportation metrics in certain categories (formal interior removals of Mexicans, for example) [lag peak Biden-era figures](#) in 2023 and 2024. Independent tallies show the Trump administration on pace for roughly 540,000 deportations in 2025, versus [higher annual totals](#) under Biden in prior years when including returns and expulsions.

Whether viewed as strategic resource management or a strategy to justify not arresting anyone in the Epstein files (and other white-collar criminals), the situation illustrates immigration's enduring role as a tool for reallocating power and shielding institutional misconduct. With the 2030 census approaching, debates over who counts — and who pays — remain central to American federalism.

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