

THE CONSTITUTION PROJECT



Safeguarding Liberty, Justice & the Rule of Law

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - February 27, 2013

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TCP Applauds Effort to Use Alternatives to Immigrant Detention

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Constitution Project today applauded the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) recent decision to rely on alternatives to detention for hundreds of individuals held in immigration detention centers.

"Whether or not this is a political move because of the approaching budget sequestration, we should set politics aside and recognize that this is a smart, cost-effective, and overdue policy decision. We have long argued that the federal government should not detain individuals in immigration detention, sometimes in unsafe and inhumane conditions, when they pose little to no threat to public safety and can be monitored in other ways," said TCP President Virginia Sloan.

The Obama administration announced Tuesday that it had released hundreds of individuals held in immigration detention facilities, saying it could no longer afford to house them because of across-the-board spending cuts that are set to start taking effect Friday.

In December 2009, TCP's Liberty and Security Committee released [Recommendations for Reforming our Immigration Detention System and Promoting Access to Counsel in Immigration Proceedings](#). Committee members acknowledged in the report that detention can be an important tool in enforcing our immigration laws, but argued that the federal government is locking up too many people unnecessarily and is failing to safeguard individual rights, including the rights of long-term legal permanent residents. The report urged DHS and Congress to better utilize alternatives to detention, including electronic monitoring and in-person reporting at regular intervals.

Last May, TCP [joined a coalition](#) of immigration, civil rights, civil liberties, faith-based, and community organizations in urging the Senate Subcommittee on Homeland Security Appropriations to support the Department of Homeland Security's request for reduced funding for immigration detention beds and to recommend greater spending on alternatives to detention. Both measures are appropriate steps toward reducing what has become a costly over-reliance on detention of non-citizens.

According to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials within DHS, the average daily population of immigrant detainees as of February 23, 2013 was about 30,773 people.

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About The Constitution Project

Created out of the belief that we must cast aside the labels that divide us in order to keep our democracy strong, The Constitution Project (TCP) brings together policy experts and legal practitioners from across the political spectrum to foster consensus-based solutions to the most difficult constitutional challenges of our time. TCP seeks to reform the nation's broken criminal justice system and to strengthen the rule of law through scholarship, advocacy, policy reform and public education initiatives. Established in 1997, TCP is based in Washington, D.C.



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