

86 BOOTED FROM PRISON & DEPORTED

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Body

Eighty-six convicted Colombian criminals were **deported** from New York yesterday under a new state law that authorizes the release of illegal aliens who have not finished their prison terms.

The felons, low-level drug dealers and one forger, were the first group to be **deported** under a state effort to cut prison costs and reduce crowding.

Gov. Pataki and federal immigration officials trumpeted the **deportations** as the first in a program that will save state taxpayers millions. The **deportations**, being carried out across the country, will save the U.S. government \$ 150,000 and the state \$ 1 million, said Doris Meissner, commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Hundreds of illegal immigrants serving time in New York prisons for nonviolent crimes will be pulled "out of our state and off the backs of the taxpayers," Pataki said.

"It is simply ridiculous," he said, "that in every single case, an illegal felon convicted in a nonviolent crime in New York State serves the sentence here at taxpayer expense before then being **deported**."

The new law allows state parole officials to release illegal alien inmates to the feds for immediate **deportation**.

So far, federal officials have cleared 213 New York prison inmates for **deportation**, pending state parole board approval.

The state law gives parole officials discretion in deciding who is **deported**. Illegal immigrants convicted of murder, rape and other violent crimes must first serve their entire minimum sentences.

State Attorney General Dennis Vacco said more than 7,000 of New York's 68,471 state prison inmates might be "deportable" immigrants.

The 86 **deported** yesterday had an average of 1 year and 11 months remaining on their minimum sentences. State prison officials refused to release specific criminal histories. But Pataki's chief criminal justice adviser, Paul Schechtman, said some had been imprisoned for selling several ounces of cocaine.

"We're not sending major traffickers back," he said. "They are remaining and serving their sentences."

Immigrant-rights groups criticized Pataki and federal officials for exaggerating the impact of undocumented immigrants on the prison system.

"The amount of attention they're giving it blows the issue way out of proportion," said Margie McHugh, executive director of the New York Immigration Coalition.

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