

# **Resistance Grows: Massachusetts, New York and Illinois Reject the Obama Enforcement-Only Way**

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## **Body**

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Add **Massachusetts** to the groundswell of states and localities opposing President **Obama**'s misconceived and failing immigration dragnet.

Gov. Deval Patrick announced on Monday that his state would not participate in Secure Communities, the fingerprint-sharing program that the **Obama** administration wants to impose nationwide by 2013. Gov. Andrew Cuomo halted **New York**'s involvement last week. Gov. Pat Quinn of **Illinois rejected** it last month. They join a long list of elected officials, Congress members and law-enforcement professionals who want nothing to do with the program for the simple reason that it does more harm than good.

The program sends the fingerprints of every person booked by state or local police to federal databases to be checked for immigration violations. It was supposed to focus on dangerous felons. But it catches mostly noncriminals and minor offenders, as **New York** said, "compromising public safety by deterring witnesses to crime and others from working with law enforcement."

For years Mr. **Obama**, like George W. Bush before him, has relentlessly pushed forward with immigration enforcement schemes while failing to give any relief to millions desperate to shed their illegal status.

Real reform requires a comprehensive strategy: stricter enforcement plus legalization for the millions whom it would be foolish to uproot from our society and economy. As Mr. **Obama** has driven deportations to record levels, he has gotten no closer to fixing a failed system. But he has made Republican hard-liners happy by bolstering the noxious argument that all undocumented immigrants are mere criminals, deportees-in-waiting.

This is a failure of decency and good sense. It merely punishes and does nothing to actually come to grips with the problem of illegal immigration. **Resistance** has mostly been heard at the ground level, from immigrants and advocates who say families are being split apart, workers frightened and exploited, the American dream dishonored. So it's good to hear powerful Democrats -- Mr. **Obama**'s friends and allies from large states -- telling him that with Secure Communities he has gone **way** overboard.

What these states' actions mean, practically speaking, is unclear. States like **New York** signed contracts with the Department of Homeland Security to enter Secure Communities, and now the administration insists that they must participate. If they send suspects' fingerprints to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for criminal checks -- as states must and will continue to do routinely -- then the F.B.I. will share that data with the Department of Homeland Security. There is no **way** to opt out.

We'll see about that. The idea that the federal government can commandeer states' resources for its enforcement schemes seems ripe for legal challenge. And it's wrong to make state and local police departments the gatekeepers of immigration enforcement. It should not be up to local cops to drive federal policy by deciding which neighborhoods and people are the focus of their crackdowns.

## Resistance Grows: Massachusetts, New York and Illinois Reject the Obama Enforcement-Only Way

We welcome the votes of no-confidence in Secure Communities. The message is clear and **growing** louder: Mr. **Obama** and the homeland security secretary, Janet Napolitano, need to try something else. That something else is real immigration reform that combines a path to legality with necessary measures to secure our borders and deport real criminals who are here illegally.

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