

Controversial anti-illegal immigration program to continue in Pr. William jail

By [Jeremy Borden](#), Published: December 31

Federal immigration officials have notified Prince William County and other localities that they will extend a controversial program that seeks to identify undocumented immigrants once they are booked into local jails, officials said.

The program, which allows local police officers to investigate and detain illegal immigrants serving jail time and hand them over to federal authorities, was set to expire in Prince William [at the end of Monday](#). However, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials notified Prince William late last week that its program, called 287 (g), would be extended in Prince William's regional jail through at least June 30, said Prince William Board Chairman Corey A. Stewart (R-At Large).

However, area task forces on the street who investigate the presence of undocumented immigrants will no longer be able to operate under the agreement, ICE officials said. The jail program will allow the 39 local jails nationwide who have similar agreements to detain all those arrested and booked if they are found to be in the country illegally.

"I don't give credit to the Obama administration often but you have to give credit where credit is due," said Stewart, who was pleased with the decision. "They should be complemented for that. ... We have received no complaints from the federal government with regard to how we're implementing it. They see it as a model program and it's a success story."

Dani Bennett, an ICE spokeswoman, said in a statement that maintaining the jail agreements is part of "smart and effective immigration enforcement."

Prince William officials say they have detained more than 5,500 illegal immigrants since the program began in 2007. However, whether federal officials actually deport those detained has remained a sticking point — the county has sued the federal government seeking more information on how many of those detained are actually deported.

Critics have said the 287 (g) program seeks to deport those guilty of less serious crimes — a strain on state and federal resources — as well as encourages racial profiling.