

# Local Cops Divided Over Continuing To Help Federal Immigration Agents

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The police director for the city of Newark is ordering his officers to refuse federal immigration officials' requests that they detain suspected undocumented immigrants accused of minor crimes.

In California, the legislature is considering a measure that would call for local law enforcement agencies not to hold immigrants held on minor offenses so that immigration authorities can pick them up. The bill allows local police to hold only the most serious criminals for immigration authorities.

And in New Orleans, the sheriff no longer will honor federal immigration requests to hold immigrants, except those who are held in the jail for certain felonies.

But in Knox County, Tenn., Sheriff Jimmy Jones is going against the tide, demanding more immigration enforcement and fighting for federal authorities and local police agencies to work closer together.

Jones, whose application the federal government denied for a program that would have established a joint effort to detain and deport undocumented immigrants, vowed to continue an aggressive approach to illegal immigration, reported WATE-TV 6 in Knoxville, an ABC News affiliate.

The disparate actions of law enforcement officials around the country underscore the conflicting views among police and local officials over the concept of enforcing immigration at the local level.

Advocates of keeping immigration enforcement and local policing separate say it hurts public safety when communities see their police as quasi-immigration agents. Immigration enforcement, they say, is a federal responsibility.

“With this policy in place, Newark residents will not have to fear that something like a wrongful arrest for a minor offense will lead to deportation,” said Udi Ofer, executive director of the New Jersey chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, according to [The Star Ledger](#). “It ensures that if you’re a victim of a crime, or have witnessed a crime, you can contact the police without having to fear deportation.”

The ACLU and immigrants rights groups worked with city officials to develop Newark’s new policy.

Immigration officials have several programs in which they work with local law enforcement agencies to identify deportable immigrants. But various of those programs, particularly Secure Communities and 287g, are controversial.

Immigration officials say they are important to finding and deporting immigrants who are dangerous, who have engaged in serious crimes. But critics say such programs often end up ensnaring a large number of people who have been stopped by police for such things as traffic violations or disorderly persons offenses.

“If we arrest somebody for a disorderly persons offense and we get a detainer request were not going to hold them in our cell block,” said Newark Police Director Samuel DeMairo, according to *The Star Ledger*.

Some police critics of programs such as Secure Communities – in which fingerprints of suspects in custody at local jails are checked against Homeland Security database – say that they add to their workload and make immigrants who witness, or are victims of, a crime afraid to report it.

In the program 287G, local police authorities who enter into an agreement with the Department of Homeland Security may arrest and detain undocumented immigrants and begin deportation proceedings.

The arguments for and against 287G are similar to those regarding Secure Communities.

The New Orleans policy arose from a settlement in a federal lawsuit filed by two men who were detained for several months in Orleans Parish Prison after they had served brief sentences for minor offenses.

The Justice Department, which was investigating the Orleans Parish Prison during the lawsuit, found a shoddy system of tracking immigration detention requests and an inability of staff at the jail to communicate with Spanish-speaking detainees.

The new policy calls for the New Orleans sheriff’s office to refuse requests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement to detain a person except when a felony is involved, according to [The New York Times](#).

In New Jersey, Newark’s decision not to work with federal immigration authorities quickly became an issue in the Senate race, where Newark Mayor Cory Booker, a Democrat, is running against Steve Lonegan, a Republican with a reputation in the state for hard line view on immigration.

“We’re sending a signal,” Lonegan said about Newark’s policy, according to *The Star Ledger*. “You can come to the country illegally, you can shoplift, you can vandalize, but it’s all right. We’re going to make sure you’re safe.”

Knox County Sheriff Jimmy Jones, meanwhile, said that Homeland Security's decision not to admit his department into the 287g program is not going to stop him from cracking down on undocumented immigrants.

“I will continue to enforce these federal immigration violations with or without the help of [immigration officials],” he said in a public statement, according to WATE-TV 6.. “If need be, I will stack these violators like cordwood in the Knox County Jail until the appropriate federal agency responds.”

Read more: <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2013/08/22/local-cops-divided-over-continuing-to-help-federal-immigration-agents/#ixzz2coaYzZ11>