

Archives Deals Pam Strickland: Bad idea to let locals enforce immigration laws



By Pam Strickland
Posted April 6, 2012 at 4 a.m.

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Although President Barack Obama has proposed a phasing out of the controversial U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement program known as 287(g), the Knox County Sheriff's Office is one of two local law enforcement agencies in the country that will get funding for the initiative this spring, ICE has confirmed. The other is Horry County, S.C., which includes Myrtle Beach.

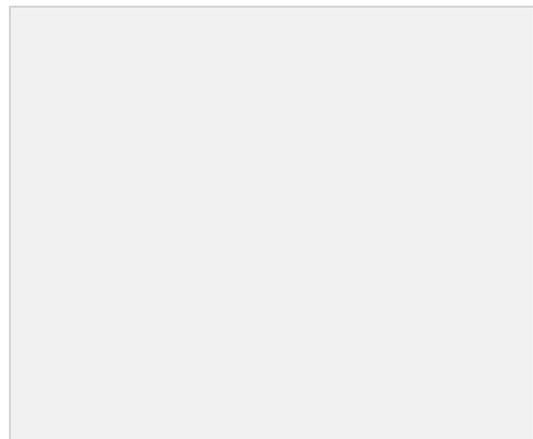
ICE spokesman Temple Black said ICE officials have an April 17 meeting with Knox County Sheriff J.J. Jones to discuss a memorandum of agreement. KCSO spokeswoman Martha Dooley confirmed this. Jones referred all other all questions to ICE. .

When an agency is part of a 287(g) program, officers from that agency are trained at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Charleston, S.C., for four weeks. They then are supervised by ICE agents, "focusing resources on identifying and processing for removal of criminal aliens who pose a threat to public safety or a danger to the community."

The program has drawn controversy because local officers have not always been properly supervised, and they have not always focused on individuals who have been criminals. This history was in mind when local members of the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition and the Allies of Knoxville Immigrant Neighbors first heard of the Knox County 287(g) funding in early March.

TIRRC and AKIN quickly organized a March 29 call to action meeting at St. James Episcopal Church that was attended by 75 people, said Meghan Conley, a University of Tennessee sociology doctoral student and East Tennessee organizer with TIRRC.

"People were concerned about the fear it would create between law enforcement and the community," Conley said. "And there is a great deal of concern about the officers



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performing as ICE agents with only four weeks' training."

Conley said that the expansion of 287(g) in two Southern counties is based on the false assumption that "Southerners will favor such xenophobic immigration policies that have time and again proven to result in racial profiling.

"This means that we have the unique responsibility to prove to the national arena that residents of these counties will not tolerate the imposition of such hateful and inhumane policies in our communities."

Joy West of AKIN said that many people couldn't understand why, if Tennessee had the newer ICE program, Secure Communities, 287(g) was needed. With Secure Communities, when someone is arrested they are fingerprinted and information is sent to ICE, and the federal agency has 48 hours to determine whether to take custody of the individual.

Black said that 287(g) and Secure Communities, which went into place in January, are inherently different. However, they are complimentary because when combined, they enhance ICE's ability to "identify and remove criminal aliens and others who fall within the ICE civil immigration enforcement priorities."

Knox County was selected because "ICE believed the partnership would be a beneficial relationship to enhance public safety. Also, ICE has an office in Knoxville that will be used to oversee and support the Knox County program," Black said. He also said that there will be ongoing training for officers. The county will not get any federal funds, though it will get computers and other technology.

Given the county's current budget squeeze and the 287(g)'s history of controversy because of poor ICE supervision, this is a bad idea.

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April 6, 2012
6:30 a.m.

nemesis443 writes:

Yet it's okay to let them enforce federal gun laws, drug laws, etc. Apparently Pam wants local law enforcement to enforce federal laws that only progressives favor.

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April 6, 2012
7:47 a.m.

dkta writes:

A word to TIRRC when someone comes into this country illegally, they are not Refugees, they violated the laws of this country, therefore they are Criminals. This country has one of the most liberal immigration policies in the world, if you want to live here, then come legally and be welcomed.

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April 6, 2012
9:54 a.m.

tmfoster1 writes:

I am a tax payer, and I do not need my money to be spent on useless policies to enforce racial profiling and deport non felon immigrants.

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April 6, 2012
9:59 a.m.

Squeezy writes:

"Bad idea to let locals enforce immigration laws"

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Well, our last several Presidents and Congress just outright REFUSE to enforce immigration laws... then you are basically saying that NO ONE should be enforcing immigration laws?

Why the hell even have immigration laws, if no one in our Federal gov't has the honor, courage, or sense of duty - to enforce the the laws they SWORE to uphold?

Arizona has a serious problem with illegal immigrants, drug/ human smuggling, and vicious border gangs & cartels. So when Obama refused to help them, they tried to help themselves.... only to get sued by Obama and sneeringly called "racists" by our President.

Arizona was basically told "tough noogies, you'll do what we say and like it, and if you DARE try to defend yourselves, you will be punished".

Either change the immigration laws, or frikkin' enforce them. This garbage of Presidents and bureaucrats utterly IGNORING Federal law - just because grinning politicians lust for those juicy Latino votes - is an outright BLATANT violation of the Oaths our public servants take to uphold our law, and an extremely dangerous precedent for the nation.

April 6, 2012
10:15 a.m.

ag29 writes:

I stress the fact that in Knoxville we already have the secure homes program and a second program would simply be a waste of money. It cost 12,500 to deport one person, and i sincerely oppose spending that money to deport an immigrant for simple misdemeanors.

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