

TAKE A TWO-HOUR
BUSINESS TRIP.
TO THE NEXT LEVEL IN YOUR CAREER.

VANDERBILT
EXECUTIVE PROGRAMS OPEN HOUSE

Tuesday, Sept. 11 | 4:00 to 6:00 PM

Executive Development Institute—Open Enrollment, Certificate and Custom Programs

VANDERBILT BUSINESS

LEARN MORE ▶

ADVERTISEMENT

Davidson County sheriff to end immigration screening program

Sheriff says opting out of 287(g) is more about charter case than controversy

5:14 AM, Aug 22, 2012 | [Comments](#)

[Recommend](#)

1 person recommends this. Be the first of your friends. Be the

[Recommend](#)

✉ 🖨 ⏪ ⏩ A A+



Davidson County Sheriff Daron Hall at the minimum security jail / Sanford Myers / File / The Tennessean

Written by
**Brian Haas and Adam
Tamburin**
The Tennessean

Starting in October, Davidson County's jailers will no longer interrogate and initiate charges against suspected illegal immigrants who are arrested.

FILED UNDER

[News](#)
[News Crime & Courts](#)

Sheriff Daron Hall, on Tuesday, announced that his office will not renew its federal agreement to participate in the 287(g) immigration screening program, ending a policy that became as divisive as it was litigated.

The 287(g) program allowed local jailers to function as immigration authorities. They could detain, file charges and begin the

ADVERTISEMENT

Most Popular

Most Commented

More Headlines

- 1 Tennessee ACT scores scrape bottom
- 2 What next, a biscuit-shape building?
- 3 Tennessee Titans' Jake Locker still faces accuracy questions
- 4 Saint Thomas Health cuts 150 positions
- 5 2011 loss motivates Goodlettsville Little League team

Most Viewed



deportation process for suspected illegal immigrants who passed through the jail. The program, which began in 2007, processed more than 10,000 suspected illegal immigrants in Davidson County.

287(g) vs. Secure Communities

- 287(g) is a federal immigration program that allows local jailers to function as immigration authorities. They can detain, file charges and begin the deportation process for suspected illegal immigrants who pass through the jail.
- Secure Communities is a plan in which jailers simply forward fingerprints to federal authorities, who decide whether to detain suspected illegal immigrants.

Detained immigrants

The number of immigrants detained under the Davidson County Sheriff's Office's 287(g) immigration enforcement program has dropped steadily since 2008.

2007 (April-Dec.)	2,242
2008	2,514
2009	2,060
2010	1,469
2011	1,102
2012(Through Aug. 19)	653

SOURCE: Davidson County Sheriff's Office

[Deportation case dropped against Overton graduate Mercedes Gonzalez](#)

[2/2/11: Davidson County's rate of deporting immigrants for minor offenses among highest](#)

[4/10/07: Illegal immigrant pleads guilty in fatal car crash](#)

[Timeline: History of 287 \(g\) in Nashville](#)

[1/19/11: Lawyer calls for end to 287\(g\)](#)

[Davidson Co. sheriff plans announcement on immigration program](#)

[Immigration program stirs excitement, uncertainty](#)

['UndocuBus' puts focus on U.S. immigration policy](#)

[Nashville wants to spell out sheriff's duties in charter](#)

[U.S. private prisons bank on immigrants](#)

[Relaxed deportation rules open dream for young immigrants](#)

[287\(g\) immigration program goes before TN Supreme Court](#)

Related Links

12/3/11:

Hall declared it an "overwhelming success," but critics of the program said it tore apart immigrant families because the sheriff detained and earmarked for deportation many nonviolent immigrants who had committed minor offenses.

For years defense and immigration attorneys have questioned the program's legality. One case, which [questions whether the sheriff has the authority to participate](#), could be decided by the Tennessee Supreme Court any day.

Hall said his decision to end it had less to do with litigation and debate than it did with a proposed Metro Charter amendment that would spell out all of the sheriff's powers once and for all.

"I did not want 287(g)'s future to distract from the charter amendment," he said.

Decision applauded

Whatever the reason, Hall's decision was hailed by immigrant attorneys and advocates who have long complained that his program was more likely to deport illegal immigrants busted for traffic violations than serious crimes.

"While we commend Sheriff Hall for recognizing that 287(g) is not right for Nashville, the lessons of 287(g) — encouragement of racial profiling, frequent deportations for misdemeanors, erosion of trust in law enforcement and the consequent undermining of public safety — must be considered when any other immigration enforcement program is implemented," Hedy Weinberg, executive director of the American

Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee, said in a statement. "We hope that this announcement marks the start of a new chapter in which



Woman freed after 49 years says mom's letter changed life

Aug. 15, 2012

PHOTO GALLERIES



Titans camp Aug. 21



Highballs & Hydrangeas

GoToMeeting Download

Attend Your Meeting From Anywhere. Try GoToMeeting Today For Free!
www.GoToMeeting.com

AdChoices

ADVERTISEMENT

all Nashville residents will be treated fairly regardless of race or ethnicity, in accordance with our reputation as a welcoming and inclusive city.”

While relieved that the sheriff will end 287(g), immigration advocates expressed trepidation about his intentions to rely on another federal program called Secure Communities.

Secure Communities is a different plan, in which jailers simply forward fingerprints to federal authorities, who then decide whether to detain suspected illegal immigrants. Immigration authorities then prioritize immigrants to deport dangerous criminals, fugitives and repeat immigration offenders.

The federal government hopes to have Secure Communities in every community across the nation by the 2013 fiscal year.

“This is a good thing, but I’m still concerned about what’s going to happen next,” said Mercedes Gonzalez, a 19-year-old illegal immigrant who was arrested for driving without a license and held for deportation just days before she was to graduate from Overton High School. Deportation proceedings against her were eventually dropped.

Minor offenses

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement began the 287(g) program in 1996 to allow local law enforcement agencies to detain illegal immigrants, file charges and begin the deportation process. When Gustavo Garcia Reyes, an illegal immigrant, killed a Mt. Juliet couple in a DUI crash in 2006, Hall decided he would participate in the program.

While 287(g)’s stated purpose was to address “serious criminal activity,” Hall made no bones about taking even minor crimes into account in screening for illegal immigrants. Reyes had been convicted of several minor offenses. If he’d have been deported after one of those arrests, Hall reasoned, two people might be alive today.

But the program immediately came under criticism as suspected illegal immigrants were processed for deportation after traffic citations, even fishing license violations. A 2011 report by the immigrant rights group the Migration Policy Institute found that Davidson County had one of the highest rates in the nation of deporting illegal immigrants after traffic offenses.

Gregg Ramos, a Nashville attorney who was on an early 287(g) advisory committee formed by Hall, has said that he would have fully supported the program had it focused just on serious, violent criminals.

“It was designed to be against real criminals, not minor traffic

offenders,” Ramos said Tuesday. “The 287(g) program did more to separate families than anything else that we have ever had in our community.”

Hall eventually disbanded the advisory committee.

But the biggest challenge to the program came after legal immigrants became ensnared in the program.

Authority at issue

Daniel Renteria-Villegas was born in Portland, Ore., but was detained twice in 2010 by the Davidson County Sheriff’s Office under the 287(g) program — this despite having a valid Tennessee driver’s license, passport, birth certificate and Social Security number.

His ensuing lawsuit, filed by immigration attorney [Elliott Ozment](#), has made it all the way to the Tennessee Supreme Court. Ozment argued that the 1963 Metro Charter stripped Davidson County’s sheriff of nearly all of its policing power and that Hall had no authority to perform immigration investigations.

The high court heard arguments in June and could render a decision at any time. It also prompted Metro to propose changes to its charter to spell out exactly what powers the sheriff has.

Ozment said a favorable ruling could cause the sheriff to scrap 287(g) sooner than predicted, something he’s hopeful will happen.

“This 287(g) was a destructive program that was responsible for the disruption of thousands of families, separating little children from their fathers and mothers. That’s contrary to the values of our community,” Ozment said.

Once the program ends, Secure Communities will take over, with jailers passing along fingerprints of all arrestees to federal immigration authorities.

But still, Ozment said, Secure Communities must prove itself a better alternative.

“Whether or not those federal immigration officials discharge this program properly is another question,” he said. “We’ll have to wait and see.”

 [View Comments](#) | [Share your thoughts »](#)

TOP VIDEO PICKS
selected by Taboola



[Deportation Proceeding?](#)

Call Our Deportation Defense Lawyer Today To Help In Immigration Court
www.visalaw.com/atlantadeportation.html

AdChoices 



Woman freed after 49 years says mom's lette...
Aug 15, 2012



Nearly naked firefighters under investigation
Aug 8, 2012



Police shoot, kill man near Times Square
Aug 12, 2012

ARCHIVES

View the last seven days
Yesterday, Aug. 21
Monday, Aug. 20
Sunday, Aug. 19
Saturday, Aug. 18
Friday, Aug. 17
Thursday, Aug. 16
Wednesday, Aug. 15
See our [paid archives](#) for news older than a week.

EVENT CALENDAR



Nashville Sunday Jazz Band
Sunday, Aug 26, 7:00 pm
Chappy's on Church, Nashville

[All events](#)

DATA



[Today's Traffic Incidents](#)
[Crime Map](#)
[Property Transfers](#)
More data



ADVERTISEMENT

THE TENNESSEAN

[Site Map](#) | [Back to Top](#) ^

NEWS

- [Crime & Courts](#)
- [Government & Politics](#)
- [Politics Blog](#)
- [Local Data](#)
- [Faith & Values](#)
- [Education](#)
- [State News](#)
- [Nation & World](#)

COMMUNITIES

- [Wilson](#)
- [Dickson](#)
- [Sumner](#)
- [Williamson](#)
- [Robertson](#)
- [Rutherford](#)
- [Ashland City](#)
- [Davidson](#)

SPORTS

- [Titans](#)
- [Predators](#)
- [UT](#)
- [Vanderbilt](#)
- [MTSU](#)
- [Colleges](#)
- [High Schools](#)
- [Motorsports](#)

BUSINESS

- [Auto Industry](#)
- [Music Industry](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Health Care](#)
- [Stocks](#)
- [Technology](#)

LIFE

HELP

- [Customer Services](#)
- [Feedback](#)
- [Staff Directory](#)
- [Place an Ad](#)
- [Submit a Letter](#)
- [Work for us](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Buy a photo](#)

FOLLOW US

- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Mobile](#)
- [RSS](#)
- [E-mail Alerts](#)
- [Text Alerts](#)

[Special Reports](#)

[Today's Traffic](#)

OBITUARIES

[Search Obituaries](#)

ENTERTAINMENT

[Event Calendar](#)

[Music](#)

[Restaurants & Dining](#)

[Metromix](#)

[Arts & Culture](#)

[Crossword](#)

[Sudoku](#)

OPINION

[Editorials](#)

[Letters to the Editor](#)

[Tennessee Voices](#)

[Teachable Moments](#)

[Live Chats](#)

[Nashville Bloggers](#)

[Brainstorm Nashville](#)

[Ms. Cheap](#)

[Family](#)

[Shopping Diva](#)

[Society](#)

[Nashville Lifestyles](#)

[Travel](#)

[Home & Garden](#)

[Health & Fitness](#)

[Food & Wine](#)

[Portfolio](#)

[News](#)

[Jobs](#)

[Cars for Sale](#)

[Homes for Sale](#)

[Apartments for Rent](#)

[Real Estate](#)

[Shopping](#)



GANNETT

Copyright © 2012 www.tennessean.com. All rights reserved.

Users of this site agree to the [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Notice/Your California Privacy Rights](#), and [Ad Choices](#)