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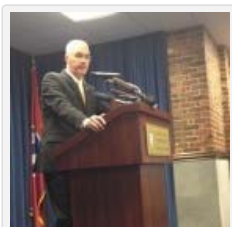
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Davidson County Sheriff Announces Exit from Controversial 287(g) Program

Tuesday, August 21st, 2012, by Blake Farmer

The Davidson County Sheriff says he will discontinue his department's role in deporting illegal immigrants. Daron Hall announced Tuesday that Nashville will no longer participate in the controversial immigration screening program known as 287(g).



Davidson County Sheriff Daron Hall made Nashville one of the first participants in the federal 287g immigration enforcement program. Photo by Blake Farmer/WPLN

The program has effectively deputized local officers and made them immigration agents who check the status on everyone arrested in Nashville. Since the program began five years ago, more than 10,000 illegal aliens have been processed for removal from the country.

Sheriff Hall says there's been an 80 percent decline in how many arrests in Nashville are illegal aliens.

"We said from the beginning we would not continue to do the program if it was not having a significant impact in our community and we would move on. Well that day has come."

Sheriff Hall says the program has been so successful that it's no longer needed. The workload for the dozen deputies assigned to screen inmates has dropped by 70 percent.

The timing of the announcement, Hall says, has to do with a separate but related debate. The Metro Council is considering a charter amendment that would more clearly define the sheriff's role.

"I did not want 287(g)'s future to distract from this process as the council and the public considers this amendment."

There's also a case pending in the Tennessee Supreme Court, challenging whether the Davidson County sheriff has any law enforcement authority. Most was taken away when the city and county consolidated 50 years ago.

Immigrant advocacy groups are giving muted praise. The Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition calls the end of 287(g) a "small step forward." However, they say many immigrants will still live in fear of deportation.

Nashville is now part of the federal Secure Communities program, which also puts illegal immigrants on the path toward deportation. That's why undocumented immigrants like Amelio Moreno aren't exactly cheering.



"It's still deporting our communities and it's still hurting our families, so we want it to be gone like 287(g)."

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participate in 287(g) have to renew their contracts with the federal government in October. A spokesperson with Immigration and Customs Enforcement says Nashville is one of only a handful that has chosen to pull out.

Amelio Moreno attended the 287(g) announcement and says he has several family members who were deported under the program. Photo by Blake Farmer/WPLN



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