

Public forums set to discuss immigration policy in Anne Arundel

Posted by [Alan Van Wormer](#) On 01/08/2019

Annapolis, MD – Anne Arundel County Executive Stuart Pittman will be hosting two town hall meetings to discuss and listen to the public's concerns on his decision to end the county's immigration screening program.

The first town hall meeting will take place on Monday, Jan. 14, 6 p.m. at the Chesapeake Arts Center (194 Hammonds Lane, Brooklyn Park, MD 21225).

The second meeting will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 16, 2019, 6:00 p.m. at Southern High School (4400 Solomons Island Road, Harwood, MD 20776).

Police Chief Timothy Altomare and Acting Superintendent of Detention Facilities William Martin will also attend the meetings.

In late December, Pittman announced that the County is formally terminating its federal contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to screen prisoners in county jails for immigration status. The program operates pursuant to the authority of Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act and is commonly referred to as 287(g).

Pittman made the announcement after reviewing data and statistics compiled on the program since it became operational in December 2017. The County Executive was joined in making the announcement by County Police Chief Timothy Altomare and Superintendent of Detention Facilities Terry Kokolis.

"The data speaks loud and clear – 287(g) does not help make Anne Arundel County safer," said Pittman. "Our county detention staff should be focusing on local law enforcement responsibilities rather than furthering controversial federal immigration policy."

Under 287(g), ICE-trained county detention staff screen individuals during intake at the detention center to determine their federal immigration status. This occurs only after individuals are already taken into custody for committing a crime. County law enforcement officers do not arrest individuals on the basis of immigration status. Therefore, 287(g) does not result in arresting undocumented immigrants - it only identifies whether criminals already in custody are undocumented.

On December 12, County Executive Pittman requested statistics from Superintendent Kokolis regarding the county's participation in the federal 287(g) immigration program. After reviewing the data, Pittman and key public safety staff have determined that the 287(g) program has no meaningful impact on keeping county residents and visitors safe, nor does it assist in the county's effort to identify or arrest violent criminals. Pittman concluded that ending the 287(g) contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is in the best interest of Anne Arundel County and will formally send written notice to ICE on December 27.

A copy of the report is available below:

<https://www.aacounty.org/news-and-events/news-resources/report-on-the-impact.pdf>

"The job of County Police is to keep people in Anne Arundel County safe," said Police Chief Timothy Altomare. "I'm here today to tell you we can do that job better without 287(g) in place. We need communities to trust the police to help us solve crimes – not fear us because they are worried their friends or family may be detained or deported."

Only two other counties, Frederick and Harford, have contracts with ICE under 287(g). By terminating its 287(g) contract, Anne Arundel County will join the other 21 counties that have elected not to partner with ICE on immigration screening in its jails. According to Pittman, the County will not interfere with ICE operations, meaning that Anne Arundel County will not be a so-called sanctuary county.

"The men and women of the Department of Detention Facilities are dedicated and hard working," said Superintendent Terry Kokolis. "They fully comply with each new initiative undertaken and the 287(g) Program was no different. Going forward, they will change focus to the planning necessary to open the Department's new Central Booking Facility in 2019."

In addition to the 287(g) program, Anne Arundel County has an Intergovernmental Service Agreement (IGSA) with ICE to hold up to 130 male detainees aged 18 or older with medium to low security ratings at Ordnance Road Detention Center. The program was authorized in September 2017 and the first detainees arrived in November of that year.

According to County Executive Pittman, various local pastors and immigration attorneys have visited the facility and report that conditions there are more humane than where these individuals would be sent if we were to close it. Pittman toured the facility on December 26, and after being briefed on its operations and speaking to detainees there who have experienced conditions at other ICE detention facilities, has concluded that the facility should remain open.

"After touring the facility I am impressed with the professionalism and dedication of the staff and I admire the serious responsibility they take to uphold our values and ensure every person in their custody is treated humanely," said Pittman. "It is clear to me that those individuals are better off here than somewhere else."

Nearly all of the detainees at Ordnance Road are awaiting hearings on their immigration status. Pittman announced that the Administration will work with the University of Maryland School of Law Immigration Clinic on a plan to provide access to lawyers for the detainees.

[Report on the Impacts](#)