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In Monmouth, Local Immigration Deputies

By CHARANNA ALEXANDER

Early next year, corrections officers in Monmouth County will begin to learn to enforce the nation's immigration laws. But they are not leaving their jobs to work for the federal government.

The county has elected to take part in a federal law, familiarly known as 287(g), that authorizes local law enforcement officers to aid the Department of Homeland Security on immigration matters.

Monmouth County will be the second jurisdiction in New Jersey, after Hudson County, to take part in the new federal plan. Nationwide, the 287(g) program has been adopted by 66 counties in more than 25 states.

"The program will serve as a safeguard that an inmate is not released into the community prematurely," Kim Guadagno, the sheriff of Monmouth County, said in a statement. "We simply ensure that if you are arrested and put behind bars, and you are an undocumented alien, you will be processed by federal authorities before being released." The county opted to have only its corrections officers, not its police, take part in the program.

But Charles Goldstein, executive director of the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network, an immigrant rights coalition, objects to the plan. "There is objection throughout the entire state of New Jersey," he said. "We have sent letters to everyone." For one thing, he said, such a dual role — police officer and immigration agent — puts a divide between the police and the residents whom they protect.

Over all, Mr. Goldstein said, deputizing local officers to enforce federal law "is bad for law enforcement, immigrants and their families, and communities in general."