



## New Jersey pro-immigration leaders call for a halt to 287g on the steps of town hall

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By **Jamie Duffy**



Jamie DuffyPro-immigration rights leaders

gathered today on the steps of Morristown's town hall to call for a halt to the federal program known as 287g, the measure which allows local police officers to become deputized immigration agents. From left are Robert Cowen, American Jewish Committee, Esperanza Porras-Field, Morris County Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce, Rev. Osvaldo Jimenez, Iglesia Bautista Hispana, Charles "Shai" Goldstein, ex. dir., NJ Immigration Policy Network and Diana Mejia, Wind of the Spirit, a local immigrant rights group. Morristown was one of two statewide locations where pro-immigrant rights groups held press conferences calling on the federal government to scrap the federal government program known as 287(g) that allows local municipalities to deputize police officers as immigration agents.

Morristown and the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office based in Freehold were two of 11 U.S. municipalities chosen last July to participate in the program. It has become a lightning rod of controversy in Morristown since it was introduced in February 2007 by Mayor Donald Cresitello, who will finish his term at the end of this year.



Jamie DuffyAmy Gottlieb, dir., immigrant rights program, American Friends Service

Committee, said Washington will probably not be able to tackle immigration reform until health care reform is done.

It cannot be implemented until the PBA signs off on it. Charles "Shai" Goldstein of the Newark-based New Jersey Immigration Policy Network said he and the others attending the conference expected some more news on whether the program will be implemented for either Morristown or the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office toward the end of October.

Cresitello, who was not at the press conference, has continued to press for the measure, but has repeatedly said it would not be used to round-up undocumented workers.

The two candidates running for mayor this November - Democrat Tim Dougherty and Republican Jimmy Gervasio - have both said they oppose the measure, but were not present at the event.

A host of local officials have called for its abolition. Esperanza Porras-Field, an officer with the Morris County Hispanic-American Chamber of Commerce, said 287(g) would have a negative impact on the local economy and result in families being separated due to deportation. There would also be real estate vacancies and a loss of business and jobs. There are an estimated 35 Hispanic businesses in Morristown, according to MCHACC figures.

Because of the threat of 287(g) and the perceived attitude of the police, Latinos "are fearful to drive through Morristown," she said.

Diana Mejia, co-founder of the Wind of the Spirit, a local immigrant rights group formed in 2000, has insisted that Latinos are intimidated and fearful of reporting crime, dividing the community. "It's not necessary. We need to look to the future and work together."

Pastor Osvaldo Jimenez who leads a Spanish speaking congregation at First Baptist on Washington Street and has worked as a volunteer chaplain at the Morris County jail since 1991 said that police cooperation with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) has led to a "persecution of the Hispanics and Latinos in the community" where those committing a small crime find themselves whisked off for deportation. "It is racial profiling," he said.

Deportations have increased in New Jersey since 2001, according to figures supplied from the ICE office in Newark: In 2001, 1,880 people were deported; 2002, 2,466; 2003, 3,342; 2004, 3,003; 2005, 3,111; 2006, 3,127; 2007 3,389;

2008, 4,463. As of the end of July, 2009, there were 4,103 deportations, nearly as many as the whole of last year.

Goldstein's group; the American Friends Service Committee, also in Newark and represented by Amy Gottlieb, director of the immigrant rights program; and the ACLU, represented by racial justice attorney Nadia Seeratan, said there have been many criticisms of the detention system in which immigrants sometimes languish in bad conditions while awaiting trial and/or deportation.

The greatest criticism has been heaped on Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Arizona's Maricopa County that borders Mexico. It was announced two days ago that Janet Napolitano, secretary of the Department of Homeland Security which oversees ICE operations, has limited Arpaio's powers.

"Joe Arpaio, the Bull Conner of America, his wings have been clipped," said Goldstein. "He's pulling out of the program."

But allowing more municipalities to join the program is the wrong step, he said. "You can't put a fire out and light one in New Jersey. Public policy has got to be consistent."

Goldstein, Gottlieb, Wind of the Spirit and others will be traveling to Washington, D.C., on Tuesday to blanket the New Jersey delegation and ask for immigration reform, including the abolition of 287(g).

Gottlieb said it is her understanding, however, that President Obama, Napolitano and the Congress will not be able to concentrate on immigration reform "until health care is through."



Jamie DuffyBill Thompson of Channel 4 News talks to Charles "Shai" Goldstein, ex. dir. NJ Immigration Policy Network, the primary organizer of the press conference. At right in back is Nadia Seeratan, racial justice attorney for the ACLU.





Jamie DuffyAmy Gottlieb, (L), dir. immigrant rights program at American Friends Service Committee in Newark and Patty Sly, ex. dir., Jersey Battered Women's Service, Morristown



Uriel Mejia, Wind of the Spirit and Sabina

Chavez, a WotS volunteer



Jamie DuffyDavid Caicedo grew up in Morristown and is the president of the Wind of the Spirit.



Jamie DuffyRobert Cowen from the American

Jewish Congress and Esperanza Porras-Field representing the Morris County Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce.

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