

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION; Federal fingerprint plan goes statewide

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Highlight: Data on inmates could lead to deportations. Programs to go national by 2013; critics say effort a waste of resources.

Body

All 159 Georgia counties are now participating in a **federal fingerprint**-sharing program aimed at deporting violent **illegal** immigrants.

On Tuesday, 116 counties from across the state joined the Secure Communities program, according to U.S. **Immigration** and Customs Enforcement's website. Atlanta-area counties have been connected for months.

Georgia now joins 20 other states in having **statewide** coverage from the program, including Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina. ICE **plans** to have the program up and running nationwide by 2013.

The program works by comparing the **fingerprints** of everyone booked into participating jails with prints held in **federal** databases to determine whether the inmates are in the country illegally.

Federal immigration officials could seek to deport inmates when matches are found, though they say they are primarily focusing on noncitizens who have committed violent offenses and other serious crimes.

Civil and immigrant rights groups in Georgia have called on the Obama administration to dump the program, complaining it is distracting police from important crime-fighting duties and tearing families apart. They have also decried how it has resulted in the deportations of many people who have committed no crimes other than being in the country illegally.

On the other side, local jailers have praised the program, saying it is helping curb **illegal immigration** in Georgia and preventing criminals from deceiving them with aliases.

More **immigration**

House Speaker David Ralston said he is pleased with state's law.

Classification

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