

## U.S. urged to bar local police on immigration

HACKENSACK, N.J. — A statewide coalition of immigration advocacy and civil rights groups Monday urged the Department of Homeland Security to refuse Morristown, N.J., final approval to deputize its police as immigration agents.

In a letter sent to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, the executive director of the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network said that when local police are deputized to enforce immigration laws, they create rifts in their communities and make immigrant victims and witnesses reluctant to report crimes.

"The (Morristown) mayor has repeatedly indicated that among his reasons to have police officers of Morristown deputized include housing and loitering," wrote Charles "Shai" Goldstein, executive director of NJIPN. He added that the federal program 287G, which trains and authorizes local law enforcement to enforce immigration laws, "arose from concerns involving terrorism and major crimes, not as an avenue to enforce local ordinances."

The letter comes a week after Mayor Donald Cresitello told The Record in Hackensack, N.J., that he recently had signed an agreement with Homeland Security outlining how 287G would be implemented in the town, which has one of North Jersey's largest populations of day laborers.

Shortly after he applied for the program two years ago, the mayor faced fierce opposition by immigration advocacy groups, who held rallies and spoke against 287G at Town Council meetings.

Cresitello could not be reached for comment Monday.

The controversy over Cresitello's proposal made national headlines in 2007, when many local officials were taking immigration matters into their own hands, citing frustration over failed attempts by Congress to reform the immigration system.

Cresitello's plan seemed doomed last year after Morris County, N.J., officials denied the mayor's request to make unused space at the county jail available to non-criminal 287G detainees. But the mayor said last week that he persuaded Homeland Security officials to waive their requirement that the jail cooperate.

The mayor said he was awaiting a final written agreement from Homeland Security officials, and that he would then seek the Township Council's approval.

Homeland Security spokesman Michael Keegan said that the agency is reviewing the way its agreements are worded, in light of criticism including from the Government Accountability Office last week of 287G. He said Napolitano is undertaking a broad review of many immigration programs.

"One of the things that came out of the review is that the (287G) agreements were not clear enough on what were the roles and responsibilities of local authorities," Keegan said. "We're rewriting agreements."

Goldstein, a former Atlantic County assistant prosecutor, and other immigration advocates are vowing to renew their fight against the implementation of 287G in Morristown, which would be the first town in New Jersey to have the program.

"We're going to do everything we can not just to stop it, but to kill it," he said.