



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on August 11, 2026

Trump's \$3 Billion Immigration Grants Test Local Police Independence

The Trump administration is offering state and local governments up to \$3 billion to help local police enforce federal immigration law. The money, however, comes with a major condition: Applicants must take part in federal immigration enforcement, primarily through the rapidly expanding [287\(g\) program](#), which gives trained local police officers limited federal immigration authority.

While few would argue that immigration law should go unenforced, the larger question remains: Should billions in federal funding be used to draw local police departments into a federal mission and weaken the independence that keeps them accountable to their own communities?



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The BIDEN Incentive

The DOJ calls the initiative the [Bridging Immigration Related Deficits Experienced Nationwide program](#), conveniently shortened to BIDEN. The acronym is not a media invention. Congress created the BIDEN Reimbursement Fund through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

The name reflects its original purpose. Congress made qualifying expenses dating back to January 20, 2021 eligible for reimbursement. States and localities that spent their own money apprehending, detaining, prosecuting, or transporting certain illegal aliens during the Joe Biden administration may seek federal compensation for those costs. But the law also covers ongoing and new activities, making the fund both retrospective and forward-looking.

The statute actually authorized up to \$3.5 billion for the fund through September 2028. DOJ's current grant solicitation puts \$3 billion up for distribution.

But reimbursement now comes with a significant condition. Applicants must already participate in a 287(g) partnership, or commit to joining one. They must also "participate in or support" the Homeland Security Task Force (HSTF). DOJ says that can include activities connected to broader efforts against gangs, cartels, and violent crime.

That makes the program more than reimbursement for the past. It is also a powerful incentive for the future.

The money can finance new or rehired police officers and deputies, investigators, analysts, corrections personnel, and transportation staff. Local governments may also buy equipment and technology, and build, expand, or modernize temporary detention facilities.

A sheriff must now decide between two options: Join Washington's immigration operation and gain new



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officers, equipment, and detention capacity, or stay independent and leave that money on the table.

What Is 287(g)?

Section 287(g) takes its name from a provision of the [Immigration and Nationality Act](#) of 1996. It allows the federal government to effectively deputize trained state and local officers to perform specified immigration functions under Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) supervision.

The program operates through several models.

Under the Jail Enforcement Model (JEM), participating officers can identify and process removable immigrants who are already in local custody. Under the Warrant Service Officer (WSO) model, trained local officers can serve ICE administrative warrants inside jails. The Task Force Model (TFM) reaches much further. It allows local officers to exercise limited federal immigration authority while performing ordinary police duties.

That last model is particularly significant.

The Obama administration discontinued the task-force approach after complaints about racial profiling and abusive enforcement. [Trump restored it](#) after returning to office. The result has been a breathtaking expansion.

ICE reported,

As of August 10, 2026 ... ICE has signed 2,179 Memorandums of Agreement for 287(g) programs covering 39 states and 2 U.S. Territories. These include JEM agreements with 179 law enforcement agencies in 30 states and 1 U.S. Territory, 287(g) WSO agreements with 533 law enforcement agencies in 34 states, and 287(g) TFM agreements with 1,467 agencies in 32 states and 2 U.S. Territories.

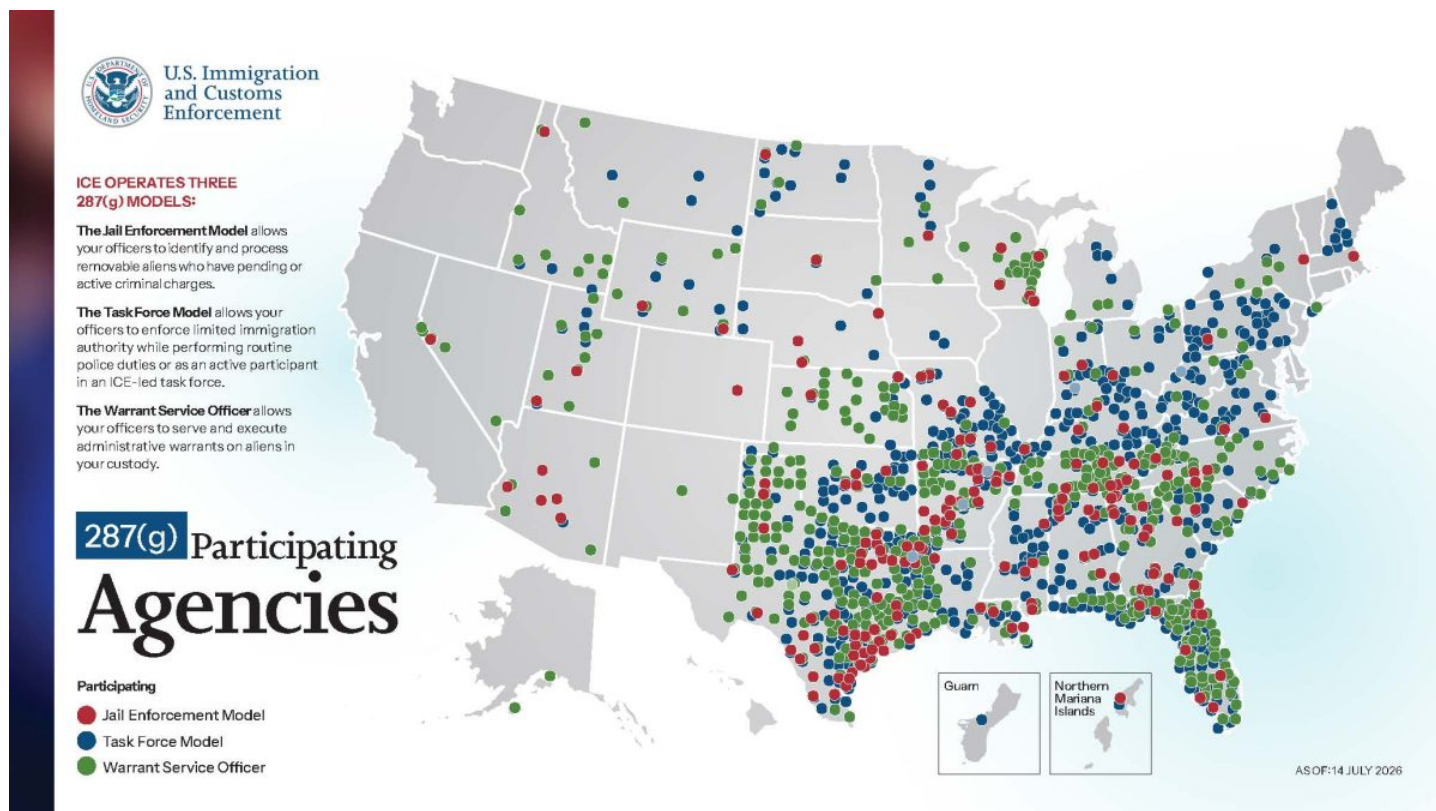
Some departments participate under more than one model, so that figure does not represent 2,179 separate police agencies. Still, it marks an extraordinary increase from the 135 agreements in place when Trump began his second term.

Who Has Signed Up?

The expansion has reached most of the country, but its center of gravity is unmistakable. ICE's [July 14 map](#) shows particularly dense participation across Florida, Texas, and much of the Southeast. Large parts of the West Coast and Northeast show far less participation.



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287(g) is not limited to large states or major police departments. It reaches some remarkably small communities.

Consider [Carroll, New Hampshire](#). The town has only four full-time police officers. All four joined the 287(g) Task Force Model. ICE sent the town \$122,515 in March. The officers had already demonstrated what the partnership meant in practice. During one operation in December, they detained seven people for ICE.

Then, there's Kenner Police Department in Louisiana. It received more than \$440,000 from ICE and DHS between February and May, according to public records obtained by [Axios](#). Kenner is one of at least 12 Louisiana law-enforcement agencies with 287(g) agreements. The New Orleans Police Department and Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office have stayed out. The records do not establish how much of Kenner's money was directly tied to immigration enforcement.

Benton County, Arkansas, shows the scale these partnerships can reach. More than 450 people were arrested by ICE at the county jail between January 1 and October 15, 2025. The figure comes from ICE arrest data analyzed by the [Associated Press](#) through the University of California, Berkeley, Deportation Data Project.

Who Opposed 287(g)

But the expansion has also produced resistance.

In February, Maryland Governor Wes Moore, a Democrat, [signed legislation](#) prohibiting state and local agencies from entering immigration enforcement agreements and requiring existing agreements to end. The law shut down partnerships involving nine sheriff's offices, including Frederick County's program, which had operated since 2008.

[Massachusetts followed](#) this month with a law barring new 287(g) agreements. [California](#), [Illinois](#), and [New Jersey](#) have also restricted or prohibited such partnerships.



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The result is an increasingly uneven map. In some states, local police have become an important part of the federal immigration enforcement system. In others, state governments are deliberately keeping them out of it.

Those restrictions may incidentally preserve local police independence. But the states imposing them have hardly made localism their guiding principle. Their broader record suggests that resistance to immigration enforcement, not resistance to federalized policing, is the stronger motive.

Keep Local Police Independent

For The John Birch Society (JBS), the parent organization of this magazine, that concern predates today's immigration debate by generations.

The Society launched its [Support Your Local Police and Keep Them Independent](#) campaign in 1963. Its argument is simple:

Today's sheriffs are accountable to the local voters who elected them, and police chiefs are accountable to those locally elected officials who appointed the chiefs.

When law enforcement agencies become entangled with the federal government (through grants, funding or other programs), this accountability shifts.

That principle does not disappear because the policy happens to be popular with conservatives.

No doubt, illegal immigration presents real problems. The federal government has a duty to enforce immigration law. Nothing prevents legitimate cooperation between local and federal authorities when public safety requires it.

But cooperation is not the same thing as deputization.

There is also a less popular, but serious, constitutional concern about ICE itself. It emerged from the post 9/11 expansion of federal power and has since evolved into a [heavily funded paramilitary force](#) with a growing domestic footprint. And while federal authority over immigration is well-established, Washington has no general police power. That power belongs primarily to the states.

The concern grows when federal agencies use money, training, and delegated authority to draw local officers into a federal system that has already expanded far beyond its original bounds.

That is what makes the new \$3 billion program such a serious threat to local police independence. Once departments hire officers, buy equipment, and expand detention capacity with federal money, separating local policing from Washington's priorities becomes much harder.

The country can enforce its immigration laws without turning local police into an extension of the federal police apparatus.



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