

ICE's Work with Local Police Departments is Being Kept Secret

ICE and state and local law enforcement offices are avoiding public records requests for 287(g) programs.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is working with more than 1,000 police departments and sheriffs' offices across the country to carry out the Trump administration's immigration agenda. American Oversight has been using Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and state public records requests to investigate these partnerships, but ICE and many state and local law enforcement entities are skirting the law to avoid accountability.

Here's what's been happening.

ICE is partnering with local law enforcement through its 287(g) program.

ICE's 287(g) program is a key part of its plan to expand into communities across the country. The program gives officers from state and local law enforcement agencies the authority to act as immigration enforcement agents. It has expanded rapidly during the second Trump administration. In December 2024, ICE had [135 287\(g\) contracts](#) with state and local law enforcement agencies. As of April 2026, ICE had at least [1,712 contracts](#) across 40 states and territories.

There are three types of 287(g) agreements that allow deputized law enforcement officers to perform different tasks:

1. Agreements where police question already-detained people about their immigration status.
2. Agreements where police execute administrative immigration

warrants, which authorize arrests and detention of immigrants, on people already in custody for state and local charges.

3. Agreements where police arrest and detain immigrants they encounter during routine police activities. This [category](#), called the task force model, was discontinued by former President Barack Obama's administration but was brought back during Trump's second term.

[Critics](#) caution that placing local police officers who are not trained in immigration law into these operations through 287(g) programs increases the likelihood of racial profiling and other civil rights violations. It can also cause police officers to redirect their time and resources to federal immigration enforcement, rather than addressing their community's [public safety needs](#).

If you want to really know what ICE is doing, you have to formally request records.

ICE is famously opaque, from the balaclavas many agents have been wearing to [hide their faces](#) to the agency's [misleading](#) characterizations of its conduct. Because ICE lacks transparency, public records requests are an essential tool to find out what the agency is really doing. Internal documents that we uncovered through a FOIA request are what finally [revealed](#) that an ICE officer killed U.S. citizen Ruben Ray Martinez in 2025, after the agency hid that fact for nearly a year. It took another FOIA request for ICE to produce the [body-camera footage](#) that undermines ICE's explanation for the fatal shooting. Other records we obtained through FOIA revealed that ICE knew there was a 353 percent increase in reports of violence by ICE officers in March 2025.

State and local governments are punting requests related to 287(g) contracts to ICE.

Since December 2024, we have sent more than 200 public records requests related to 287(g) programs to local and state governments, seeking more information about the effects of these programs. There are important questions that need to be answered: How many people have been arrested through 287(g) contracts? For those arrested through these programs, what has happened after their arrests? How many people are in custody and how many have been transported to ICE facilities because of 287(g)? The documents we have requested could help answer questions like these about how law enforcement is functioning across the country.

But so far, 14 offices have [rejected](#) or delayed our requests, using their agreement with ICE to avoid releasing the documents. Many offices claimed that any requests related to ICE or 287(g) must instead be [submitted to ICE](#). However, when we asked ICE for these same documents, ICE FOIA officers told us that they don't have access to the records. And that's likely true in some instances: ICE would need to have access to local police systems, like sheriffs' email accounts, to respond to some of the requests we submitted.

This has essentially created a public records catch-22: Only ICE is allowed to respond to requests for information about 287(g), but only local law enforcement entities have access to the information about them.

The result is that it is nearly impossible to get information from ICE without filing a FOIA lawsuit. However, that requires time, money, and resources that most requesters do not have. And even lawsuits are not always effective, as staffing cuts, office closures, and government shutdowns have slowed the government's responses in [many cases](#).

ICE claims it shouldn't have to respond to requests at all.

ICE claims that it and its 287(g) partners should not have to respond to

public records requests for two reasons. First, ICE and its 287(g) partners have cited a federal regulation ([8 C.F.R. § 236.6](#)) that states information related to detainees cannot be disclosed and documents related to that information are not considered public records. The American Civil Liberties Union is [fighting this interpretation](#), arguing that ICE cannot tell cities and states how to disclose their own records when there are state public records laws already in place.

Second, 287(g) agreements contain a section stipulating that “[i]nformation obtained or developed as a result of this [agreement], including any documents created by the [locality]...shall not be disclosed.” ICE bases this on its theory that the records themselves are the property of ICE and not of the local entity, even though the local entity has custody of the records.

The refusal to respond to public records about 287(g) harms our collective ability to hold ICE and other law enforcement accountable for the harms they are causing. We will continue to fight for these records.