

Alameda County supervisors pass resolution asking Sheriff to stop detaining immigrants

[By Angela Woodall Oakland Tribune](#)

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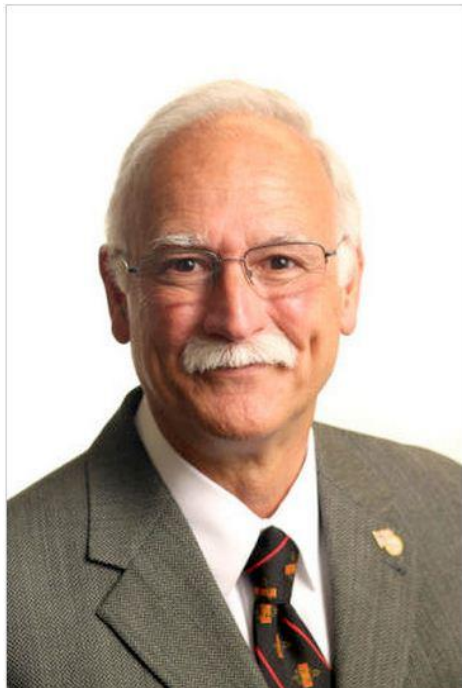
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Alameda County supervisors approved a resolution aimed at encouraging Sheriff Greg Ahern to pull out of the controversial immigration program, Secure Communities, after a long and occasionally tense meeting.

"The underlying tone in Secure Communities denies people the due process and very democracy that we are here to defend," Supervisor Richard Valle, the resolution's author, said shortly before the 3-1 vote Tuesday.

The supervisors, however, have limited authority over Ahern, an elected official.

"The sheriff is going to do whatever he wants. This is a farce," said Scott Haggerty, providing the sole "no" vote. Supervisor Nate Miley was absent.



Richard Valle Alameda County supervisor for District 2 poses for a photograph in Hayward, Calif., on Friday, Sept. 14, 2012. (Anda Chu/Staff)

The resolution was a simply symbolic philosophical statement that Secure Communities is not working the way it was intended when passed in 2008, Valle said. On that point, Valle said, he and Ahern see "eye-to-eye."

The original intent of the program run by Immigration and Customs Enforcement was to target the most serious criminals who are in the country illegally.

Local law enforcement forwards fingerprints of anyone they arrest to federal authorities. The prints are then compared against a database to check criminal histories and immigration status.

If someone arrested is undocumented or deportable, ICE agents may ask police departments and sheriff's offices to hold that person for as long as 48 hours after their scheduled release, excluding weekends and holidays, to give ICE time to take custody.

In reality, they are held longer. Individuals with an ICE hold spend an average of seven more days in Alameda County custody than people not being detained on behalf of immigration authorities, according to UC Berkeley Law School's Warren Institute, which analyzed data reported by ICE.

Ahern was not at the meeting and did not respond to requests for comment, but he has said he is working on a policy to respond to local concerns and changes in Secure Communities priorities. He has said in the past he is working on a policy in response to concerns and changing regulations at the federal level.

Supervisors Valle, Keith Carson and Wilma Chan supported the resolution.

About 500,000 Alameda County residents were born outside the United States, of which an estimated 124,000 are undocumented, according to Chan.

"When people are in fear of deportation," Chan said, "they don't report crimes."

Alameda County should not be doing the job of federal immigration authorities, she added. The Department of Justice has slashed the Secure Communities budget, ending reimbursements from ICE to the sheriff for holds, Chan said. "So it's difficult to understand why we would do this service for free."

The activists who filled the supervisors' chambers Tuesday saw the symbolic resolution as a victory although an incomplete one.

The drumbeat of attention on Secure Communities "has brought the sheriff to the table to talk to us and fix this," Ariana Gil Nafarrate, of Mujeres Unidas y Activas, said after the meeting.

Working with Ahern on the policy is, she said, "the next step."

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