



## Critics hit Morristown's immigration crackdown

### Plan calls for police to enforce federal laws

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

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**Star-Ledger Staff**

Morristown's effort to get its police deputized as federal immigration officers has sparked interest outside the town's borders, with two groups representing attorneys in the state condemning the move, and Republican candidates seizing on it as an issue in a neighboring Assembly district.

The Hispanic Bar Association of New Jersey and the Asian Pacific American Lawyers Association of New Jersey yesterday called for Mayor Donald Cresitello to withdraw the town's application to a federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement program that deputizes local and state authorities to enforce immigration laws.

The program would lead to harassment of immigrants and would make illegal immigrants afraid to report crimes to police either as victims or witnesses, according to Ivette Alvarez, executive director of the Hispanic attorneys group.

"It will not only be a drain on the local economy but it will have a negative effect on the safety of the community," Alvarez said.

The groups will monitor Morristown's application as it goes forward, Alvarez said.

Cresitello responded that the attorneys groups should not oppose the town's action, since lawyers are sworn to uphold state and federal laws.

"It would be unfortunate if they took the position that we should not uphold federal law," Cresitello said.

The powers granted by the ICE program would be used "sparingly," Cresitello said. If the town is accepted into the program, officers would enforce federal laws against illegal immigrants who commit crimes, and they might also be able to check whether contractors who pick up day workers are obeying federal and state employment laws, he said.

The issue also spilled over yesterday into a Republican Assembly election in the 26th District, which does not include Morristown. Candidate Jay Webber of Morris Plains lauded Cresitello's effort to get police deputized as federal agents and pledged to help increase cooperation between state and federal agencies to enforce immigration laws, if elected.

"It is wrong, and dangerous, for hardworking citizens to subsidize those who come here illegally," said Webber, running in a field with Assemblyman Alex DeCrose, Kinnelon Councilman Larry Casha and Montville developer Anthony Pio Costa.

Casha said Cresitello is well-intentioned but questioned whether his plan would be effective without a comprehensive and realistic federal immigration policy.

"We'll just pick illegals up, send them back and they'll be back here in a few weeks," said Casha, who favors stiffer penalties on landlords who stack buildings with illegals and tougher requirements for employers to document citizenship when hiring workers.

If Morristown joins the ICE program, it would be among the nation's first municipalities to do so. Only 10 agencies nationwide have been deputized to enforce federal immigration laws: state police in Florida and Alabama, and eight correctional facilities. Some 20 cities and towns have applied, according to ICE.

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