WHAT IS THE WARRANT SERVICE OFFICER (WSO) PROGRAM?

The easiest way to understand the WSO program is that it is 287(g)-lite. It is created under the authority of the 287(g) statute and is functionally a 287(g) program. It’s just a lot more limited than the current 287(g) model. Under WSO, delegated officers get less training and are only authorized to have a single function, which is to execute ICE administrative warrants of arrest within the jail. Under this program, ICE believes that sheriffs can return to holding people for up to 48 hours—in the local jail, but technically in ICE custody under the WSO authority—before they are transferred to longer-term ICE detention. The WSO is a mini-287(g) agreement designed to re-create the days when sheriffs held people on detainers everywhere. See a sample MOA for the WSO program.
CAN A SHERIFF/JAIL IN A ‘SANCTUARY JURISDICTION’ SIGN UP FOR ONE OF THESE WSO AGREEMENTS?

Maybe, that depends on the type of sanctuary policy that you have. In California, state law (known as SB54) prevents performing the functions of an immigration officer, pursuant to 287(g) or any other law or program; therefore no agency in California can join the WSO program. Likewise, the Attorney General of New Jersey has banned all 287(g) agreements in a binding directive, so no agencies in New Jersey can join without the AG’s specific written permission. Vermont and Illinois state laws also prevent these kinds of agreements. Other states or localities may have legislation prohibiting 287(g), and those provisions should apply to the WSO program, because it is a version of 287(g).

IS THIS WSO PROGRAM LIKELY TO LEAD TO MORE COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ICE?

Possibly yes. The WSO program is clearly designed to assuage the concerns of sheriffs who will not hold people on detainers because of legal concerns, but who are not otherwise opposed to helping ICE. The WSO program may give these sheriffs the impression that they have legal cover to start holding people extra time, without a big investment in the full 287(g) program. However, the program is voluntary, does not provide any reimbursement from ICE for the time or costs of detaining people extra days, and like detainers and 287(g) overall, it involves sheriffs directly in the deportation pipeline. For all the reasons that detainers and 287(g) deportation programs have been bad for our localities, WSO is exactly the same.

IS THIS LEGAL?

It’s hard to say yet. The 287(g) statute allows ICE a lot of leeway, but on the other hand, there may be other legal bases to challenge this program. We know that ICE frequently issues illegal detainers and warrants against U.S. citizens, and any locality that helps execute such detainers and warrants can certainly face legal jeopardy.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY SHERIFF HAS ENTERED THE WSO PROGRAM?

Keep your eyes open and make sure you are monitoring your local jail. Look out for any changes in local enforcement practices, ask law enforcement for copies of new and existing policies, and explore making requests through your state public records act law. There are only a few of these so far in Florida, but ICE will surely be trying to roll them out wherever possible.

TO STOP 287(g) IN YOUR COMMUNITY
SEE THE ILRC’S RESOURCES & TOOLKITS

ilrc.org/287g
The Warrant Service Officer (WSO) program is part of 287(g). Named after the statute it comes from, the 287(g) program allows local law enforcement to be delegated with immigration enforcement authority.

287(g) HAS VARIOUS MODELS:

**TASK FORCE MODEL**  
**BROADEST SCOPE**  
Local officers can enforce immigration laws on the streets, make immigration stops and arrests, issue detainers, and process people for deportation.  
*none currently exist*

**JAIL MODEL**  
**MEDIUM SCOPE**  
Local officers engage in immigration enforcement only within the jail, investigating immigration history, issuing detainers and warrants, and transferring people to ICE.  
*75 currently exist*

**WSO MODEL**  
**VERY LIMITED SCOPE**  
Local officers may arrest immigrants pursuant to ICE warrants in a local jail and detain them to transfer to longer-term ICE custody.  
*10 currently exist*