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## Immigrants to be checked in Oakland County

Those arrested to have fingerprints run

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Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard announced plans Wednesday to join hundreds of other communities nationwide that tap into a federal immigration fingerprint database to identify immigrants arrested for criminal activity in the county.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement would then decide whether to initiate deportation proceedings against any legal or illegal immigrants flagged by the program.

Oakland County is the 437th jurisdiction in 24 states to use the new system, ICE said. Wayne County became the first county in Michigan to use the system last year. ICE hopes to make it available in all jurisdictions by 2013.

Critics promptly accused Bouchard of exploiting the hot-button immigration issue to generate support for his Republican gubernatorial campaign.

"What we are seeing from Sheriff Bouchard is indicative of the politics of immigration being played out in the governor's race," said Ryan Bates, Michigan director of Reform Immigration for America, a coalition of groups advocating an overhaul of immigration policies.

Others, including the ACLU of Michigan and the president of the Hispanic Bar Association of Michigan, said the new initiative would promote ethnic profiling, especially of Latinos, without enhancing public safety.

Nothing could be farther from the truth, Bouchard said.

"Racial profiling is always the first false attack on someone who is simply enforcing the law," Bouchard said, expressing amazement that anyone would object to conducting an additional background check on someone arrested on a criminal charge.

He said he began working on the initiative years ago as an officer of a national law enforcement group. He said the additional database check is one of several local, state and federal computer searches Oakland County agencies conduct to check suspects.

"We don't pick and choose who we're going to check," Bouchard added. "Everyone who gets booked is checked."

Until now, Oakland County law enforcement agencies checked only the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System in addition to other local and state databases. Bouchard said the new step involves sending fingerprints to the Department of Homeland Security's Automated Biometric Identification System.

The digitized fingerprints would be transmitted automatically, and the police wouldn't know whether the suspect is an immigrant, legal or otherwise, unless contacted by ICE.

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