

County Manager Statement
February 28, 2017 County Board Meeting

Opening

Arlington—like many communities around the country—is grappling with what recent federal actions on immigration enforcement mean for our residents and our community. Regardless of what your views are with respect to immigration enforcement and the actions being undertaken by the Administration, we must remember that at the heart of every policy debate or every government statistic are people. Members of our community – our neighbors, our friends.

First and foremost, we want to say to all of our residents that we stand with you and we are here to support and assist you. Our commitment to each one of our residents is unwavering.

Arlington County has and always will be an inclusive, welcoming community that respects, honors and supports all of our residents. We pride ourselves on the fact that one in four of our residents are foreign-born and that we have long served as a destination for refugees and other immigrants. This history has benefitted us all -- with immigrants enjoying a welcoming, inclusive and compassionate community where they can flourish, and with Arlington's newcomers constantly renewing the promise of our nation and our county, diversifying the culture and experience that has enriched our mutual understanding and our lives.

Today, I am **unveiling a new set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and a one-stop Immigration Resource Website** to help residents access important information about County policies, procedures and services. I believe one of our primary responsibilities is to provide as much information and as much certainty to our residents in these very uncertain times and we will continue to do so.

I also want to say very clearly that we want and need to hear from you. If any of our residents have questions or need assistance you should not fear contacting the County – we are here for you.

Is Arlington a Sanctuary City?

We have heard from many residents asking about our **status as a “sanctuary city.”** Arlington County has always defined ourselves as a welcoming and inclusive community where every person has the right to live, learn, work, and play. We have not used the term sanctuary to define Arlington County. We believe that using the term “sanctuary city” could potentially mislead people into believing that Arlington County is able to shield them from immigration enforcement actions by the federal government. **Simply, we do not have the ability to protect any individual from federal immigration enforcement actions.**

Public Safety

We want all Arlingtonians to know that **our policies and practices regarding law enforcement have not changed.**

The Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) does NOT enforce federal immigration laws. The Federal government is responsible for enforcing federal immigration laws, and Arlington County will not attempt to assume this responsibility. Further, Arlington County has never participated in the 287(g) Program.

I want to reinforce that **ACPD will continue our long history of community policing,** working closely with our residents to reduce and prevent crime and improve the quality of life of all of Arlington’s residents, visitors, and businesses—regardless of immigration status. These policies have been central to creating the safety and security we enjoy in Arlington.

While ACPD does not enforce federal immigration law, ACPD will cooperate to the fullest extent with any federal, state or local law enforcement agency, including ICE, requesting assistance with executing a **criminal warrant** within Arlington County. Additionally, ACPD officers **may accompany** federal agents during an arrest when there is a local public safety concern. The purpose of ACPD involvement is to maintain the safety and security of the public. ACPD officers WILL NOT use their trusted relationship with our residents as a way for ICE to take action against them.

Meeting with ICE Leadership

Earlier this week, I **had the chance to meet with the leadership of the Washington Field Office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)**, who has responsibility for all of the Commonwealth of Virginia and Washington, DC.

They report that they are not doing wide immigration sweeps or immigration raids, but are **focusing solely on targeted actions against specific individuals.**

And, while they **assured us that 'sweeps' are not part of their standard practice today**, we recognize that in this ever changing environment, the Department of Homeland Security could **adjust their policies and procedures at any time.**

Further, they informed us that the existing DHS policy limiting actions at “sensitive locations” such as schools, churches, medical facilities and others, remains in effect. This **uncertainty makes us all uneasy.** And, we will continue to **closely monitor any potential changes** that stray away from current practices.

We conveyed the importance of ICE providing the County with information about ICE actions in our community. While there are limits to what information the Federal government is willing to share with states and localities, we will continue to ask for data as well as information regarding specific events in the County that are brought to our attention.

But I want to reinforce once again, that Arlington County **does not-and will not enforce federal immigration law.** This is the role of the federal government, and not our law enforcement officers.

FAQs and Immigrant Resources

As I mentioned earlier, our initial list of FAQs are hosted on our new one-stop **Immigration Resource Website** (*Pause to OPEN WEBSITE*).

These are the questions we have received to date, and **encourage people to email us additional questions to be added at immigration@arlingtonva.us**. The website includes information in **English and Spanish** (*pause for pointer*) about available services in our community, regardless of immigration status.

It is important that our residents know that they do not have to present any documentation about their legal status to access health care, food, shelter and education services (*Pause for pointer*)

This new website also features a '**Know your Rights**' section (*pause for pointer*)

And **links to outside organizations** that can provide legal aid (*pause for pointer*).

Arlington will always **embrace our values to be an inclusive community** that welcomes immigrants, regardless of their legal status.

And we will **continue to prohibit discrimination** based on race, color, gender status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religious observance, physical or mental ability and any other characteristic subject to marginalization.

Conclusion

This is a **difficult time that requires us to come together as a community to embrace our strengths of diversity and inclusion**. We ask that residents continue to work with each other to support our friends and neighbors.

We encourage residents and businesses to continue to share concerns and suggestions for additional actions.

In the meantime, I hope you will review this new set of resources on our website at www.arlingtonva.us (SEARCH Immigration).