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Bucks County sheriff axes ICE agreement



Bucks County Sheriff Danny Ceisler (at podium) announces the end of the county's 287g agreement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. JESS ROHAN / BUCKS COUNTY COURIER TIMES

Jess Rohan and Jo Ciavaglia
Bucks County Courier Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Bucks County Sheriff Danny Ceisler has canceled his office's agreement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Ceisler announced Jan. 14.

Bucks County's new sheriff had campaigned on this topic and said he'd formally end county participation in the controversial ICE program this month.

Following his Jan. 5 swearing-in ceremony, Ceisler confirmed that he's placed a moratorium on the 287g program. Ceisler said Jan. 14 that he'd completed the paperwork to withdraw from the federal force-multiplier program earlier in the day.

With the ending of the 287g agreement, Bucks County would return to its prior relationship with ICE, Ceisler said, citing what he described as damage that expanded immigration enforcement

does to broader criminal justice goals.

"Immigrants are our neighbors, they are our friends, they are taxpayers and they deserve the protection of law enforcement in this community," Ceisler said. "From the day this office signed up to have deputies perform immigration enforcement, immigrants began living in even greater fear than they were before."

In addition to ending the formal agreement, the new sheriff said he has instructed deputies not to ask witnesses and victims about their immigration status when they appear at county court.

Former Sheriff Fred Harran, who lost his bid for reelection in November, and 16 of his officers had been trained and deputized last year to act as federal ICE agents to enforce immigration law while performing their county duties under an agreement that Harran authorized.

While the county's 287g participation is ending, the lawsuit that greenlighted it

is continuing: The ACLU of Pennsylvania and the Community Justice Project are appealing a Bucks County court ruling in Superior Court on behalf of several community groups. The lawsuit and its appeal argue that a county sheriff doesn't have unilateral authority under state law to enter into a contract with the federal government without the approval of the county commissioners.

Nearly three weeks after Bucks County Judge Jeffrey Trauger ruled in favor of Harran last October, the sheriff lost his reelection campaign to Ceisler, who opposed the agreement.

Harran confirmed that he had never fully implemented the 287g plan. His office apparently never received the necessary equipment to implement the program, and only had access to the ICE warrant and detainer database.

Jess Rohan can be reached at jrohan@gannett.com.

MLK Day events, service projects draw near

Lacey Latch
Bucks County Courier Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

Martin Luther King Jr. Day is right around the corner, and there are plenty of ways for you to become involved in your community and embody King's message of service to others.

The Martin Luther King Day of Service started with the push for a federal holiday in recognition of the civil rights leader that began just days after his assassination April 4, 1968. It was ultimately achieved in 1983.

But within the following decade, the holiday was eventually reshaped as "a day on, not a day off" — a national day of volunteering inspired by King's life of service.

The King Holiday and Service Act

See MLK, Page 2A

Man faces attempted homicide for shooting near mobile homes

Jo Ciavaglia
Bucks County Courier Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Philadelphia man is accused of shooting and injuring a Bensalem man with a homemade gun after an early morning confrontation inside a mobile home park.

Bensalem police have charged Travis Fleck, 21, with attempted murder, two counts of aggravated assault and related misdemeanors in the Jan. 8 shooting at the Top of the Ridge park off Gibson Road.

The victim, who was treated at a local hospital for a gunshot wound to his arm, told police he was walking home to the park around 12:30 a.m. from a nearby gas station.

As he was heading toward his home in the rear of the park he alleged a red car drove by him and someone yelled,

See SHOOTING, Page 2A



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