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## **N.J. can restrict what information police share with ICE, judge rules**

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New Jersey can continue to limit what local cops tell immigration officers, a federal judge ruled Wednesday, a blow to both President Donald Trump and the South Jersey counties suing to overturn those rules.

The state currently restricts what police can tell Immigration and Customs Enforcement, known as ICE, although it doesn't prohibit cooperation completely. Cops may not ask about a suspect's immigration status, for example, and jails may not hold onto certain nonviolent offenders simply because ICE wants to arrest them, according to a directive from the state attorney general's office, which has the force of law.

Ocean County and Cape May's sheriff argued those limits were illegal and sued. The U.S. Department of Justice first joined their lawsuit and then filed its own complaint, making a similar case that the restrictions hurt public safety and prevented the federal government from enforcing immigration law.

But local restrictions on cooperation did not violate federal law, Judge Freda Wolfson of the U.S. District Court of New Jersey wrote in an opinion. Wolfson threw out the counties' lawsuit, although she said state courts may intervene in the future.

State Attorney General Gurbir Grewal celebrated the decision.

"New Jersey has the authority to draw a clear, bright line between the work of state law enforcement officers and federal civil immigration officers," he said in a statement. "This line is more important than ever, as we work hard every day to build and restore trust between New Jersey's police officers and historically marginalized communities."

A spokesman for Cape May's sheriff said they were reviewing the decision. A request for comment left with Ocean County was not immediately returned.

Immigrant rights advocates also hailed the opinion.

Local limits on cooperation made immigrants "less afraid to reside in the place they call home, especially those who are victims and witnesses of crimes" who needed to call the police, Maneesha Kelkar, interim director of the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice, said in a statement.

Keeping the restrictions will also make it easier for immigrants to shop and travel, since New Jersey will soon allow undocumented residents to get driver's licenses, said Kevin Escobar, a community organizer with the Wind of the Spirit Immigrant Resource Center.

It was not immediately clear how Wednesday's ruling affects the related lawsuit filed by the justice department.

Federal officers have said they were repeatedly blocked from getting information about people who may be in the U.S. illegally, according to the complaint, including some who had been charged or convicted of invasion of privacy or making terroristic threats. However, ICE has previously declined to say how often local cops have been blocked from handing people over to federal officers.

In a statement, ICE defended the more than 140 partnerships it has with law enforcement agencies in 25 states, and it said those agreements help lower crime.

“In ‘sanctuary’ jurisdictions where ICE is not allowed to assume custody of aliens from jails, ICE officers are forced to make at-large arrests,” the statement read. “This effort requires a significant amount of additional time and resources.”

The justice department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.