
Investigative Report:

Organizations that Advocate on Behalf of Immigration Violators Are Dictating Law Enforcement Policy to Government Officials in Arlington County, VA

Key Takeaway: Immigration activists are protecting the most dangerous immigration violators – and they’re using your tax dollars to do it.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

The philosophers Hobbes, Locke and Montesquieu famously observed that the first duty of any government is to protect the citizens who live under it. Apparently, political leaders in Arlington, Virginia need a lesson in basic civics – they’re more worried about protecting alien criminals from American justice than they are about shielding U.S. citizens from felonious foreigners.

While Arlington, Virginia has not defined itself as a “sanctuary jurisdiction,” the county website states that, “Arlington County has always defined ourselves as a welcoming and inclusive community where every person has the right to live, learn, work and play.” It’s one thing to be welcoming and inclusive. It’s quite another to intentionally make it more difficult for the federal government to enforce immigration law within the boundaries of Arlington County – thereby

making it easier for foreign nationals with criminal convictions to evade U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

In July of 2022, the five-member Arlington County Board, did just that, unanimously [approving](#) what has been labeled the “[Trust Policy](#).” This policy prohibits police officers within Arlington County from asking individuals about their immigration status. Patrol officers must obtain approval from a supervisor before notifying ICE that they suspect someone they’ve arrested has violated federal immigration law. And, the county board will begin receiving reports from the police department and the sheriff’s office on all law enforcement interactions with ICE.

Why is Arlington so intent on shielding foreign criminals from American justice? It appears that the Trust Policy was the result of active collaboration between the Arlington County Board and radical activist groups that advocate for open borders and actively oppose any kind of immigration enforcement. They include the Legal Aid Justice Center, La ColectiVA, the National Immigration Project and others. What’s even worse, is that these groups don’t think Arlington County went far enough. A [joint statement](#) issued ahead of the board’s vote on the Trust Policy claimed, “Although the proposed policy states Arlington County’s commitment to ‘protect the rights of all residents, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status,’ it falls far short of ending Arlington County’s longtime collaboration with ICE.”

Of course, that is an outright lie. In reality, the Trust Policy transforms Arlington County law enforcement agencies. They have gone from being active partners with federal law enforcement to acting as deliberate inhibitors of immigration enforcement. This would be shocking in any jurisdiction that claims to value the rule of law. However, it is particularly disturbing in this case, when one remembers that on September 11, 2001, a group of immigration violators flew a passenger jet into the Pentagon, which is surrounded by several of Arlington’s most desirable neighborhoods.

Exactly what role did these radical anti-borders organizations play in formulating Arlington County’s Trust Policy? The Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI) investigated. Here’s what we found:

THE ARLINGTON COUNTY BOARD ACTIVELY SOUGHT INPUT FROM ANTI-BORDERS ACTIVISTS

E-mails obtained by IRLI show that Arlington county board members and their staff actively collaborated with radical anti-borders organizations when formulating the Trust Policy.

Simon Sandoval-Moshenbourg, legal director Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) wrote to the Chair of the Arlington County Board, Katie Cristol to express consternation that his organization was not consulted before the Board produced an initial draft of the Trust policy. He stated, “Katie, do you have a minute to discuss the Trust Policy issue? We and a number of folks we’re talking to are very dissatisfied with the substance of the policy that’s been released, but perhaps more urgently, we’re very unhappy with the fact that it’s apparently being rushed to a vote” read a June 8 email to County Chair Katie Cristol.

Sandoval-Moshenbourg apparently got his wish to slow the process down. According to emails exchanged later that day, a board staffer spoke with board member Matt de Ferranti and learned that voting on the Trust Policy would be pushed to July.

The vote was delayed ostensibly to accommodate commentary and suggested edits from the LAJC and other radical organizations like it. On July 15, board member Matt de Ferranti sent an email to anti-borders activists, among them Sandoval-Moshenbourg and personnel associated with La ColectiVA. Attached to the email was a “near final draft of the Trust Policy.” Ferranti says explicitly that the updated draft includes “some/many” changes that the activists wanted. He ended the message by saying he looked forward to speaking to them later that morning, presumably to discuss the policy further.

THE LAJC ACTIVELY PUSHED THE BOARD TO COMPLETELY PROHIBIT POLICE CONTACT WITH ICE – EVEN UNDER VIOLENT FELONY OR TERRORIST CONDITIONS

On July 18, several days after a morning meeting between Ferranti and the aforementioned activists, Sandoval-Moshenbourg emailed him, asking if any changes had been made to the policy since the meeting. Ferranti confirmed that revisions had been made and provided a link to the final draft.

Sandoval-Moshenbourg was not pleased with what he saw. He wrote to Ferranti saying, “I’m disappointed to see that you all are planning to approve a policy

whereby police will be allowed to call ICE (literally call them, on the phone) just because a community member is being arrested on suspicion of having committed certain crimes.”

Ferranti responded, “I understand that you are disappointed. I am sorry that is the case. We have worked to do our best and consider your thought as well as all advocates.” Ferranti also noted policy “improvements” in hopes of placating the LAJC.

What exactly was Sandoval-Moshenbourg concerned about? Under the proposed Trust Policy on which he was commenting, police would only be allowed to contact federal immigration authorities in specific circumstances, with prior approval from “either the on-duty Watch Commander or any supervisor with the rank of Lieutenant or above.” Those [circumstances](#) included an illegal alien arrested for: a violent felony; a non-violent felony but considered a clearly established threat to the community; terrorism or terrorism-related charges; a human trafficking offense; or certain gang crimes. In addition, officers – with supervisory approval – would be permitted to contact ICE when an illegal alien was identified as a member of a criminal street gang. (The policy appears to be silent on the procedures to be followed if police encounter a lawfully present alien who has committed a crime that would render him/her subject to removal from the U.S.)

In short, Sandoval-Moshenbourg was worried that illegal aliens (*i.e.* people who broke American law just to enter the United States) arrested for violent felonies, terrorism, human trafficking, gang offenses and serious threats to public safety might be turned over to ICE by Arlington County law enforcement and subjected to removal from the United States.

Given that sane politicians who take their obligations seriously generally want to reduce crime in their communities, one wonders why Arlington County’s legislators are so intent on ensuring that foreign citizens who are felons, gang members and terrorists are permitted to continue residing in their county.

ARLINGTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ARE FUNDING LAJC’S ACTIVITIES

Who’s paying for the LAJC and groups like it to encourage legislators to protect those here in violation of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA)? American taxpayers are.

Contessa Riggs, senior development officer with the LAJC, wrote to Arlington County Board member Katie Cristol on February 22. She asked, “When you have a minute can you please let me know if LAJC’s funding for our immigration work in Arlington is in this years’ budget? I looked and could not find it, but then again, I’ve never been able to find it in the published budget.”

Cristol responded, “There is \$80,500 in the budget for you all under [Department of Human Services] and non-departmental, which is I think your standing contract/grant with DHS,” Cristol wrote back on February 28.

Cristol continued, “And then there is, included in the Manager’s recommendation, an additional \$25,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding to LAJC to ‘help low-income immigrants access information on housing and employment rights, eviction protections, accessing emergency aid and medical services, and updates on immigration policies.’”

A follow-up email from Riggs stated that this amount was “in-line with previous years.”

The Arlington County [Department of Human Services budget](#) for 2022, included a mention of its Community Development Block Grant. However, based on the documents available online, it’s not clear exactly how much funding the LAJC received this year from the county. The exchange referenced above would tend to indicate that Arlington County provided at least \$105,000 in public funds to the LAJC.

While Arlington County appears to be attempting to obscure the extent of its financial relationship with the LAJC, the county proudly features its links with the organization on its government [website](#). In fact, it touts the services the LAJC provides to the immigrant community, which include: training on individual rights when interacting with ICE; consultations to determine whether “immigration relief” may be available for residents in violation of the INA; and representation for detained aliens seeking release from ICE detention on bond, among other services. The website states, “If anyone has a friend or relative who has been detained by ICE, they should call LAJC as soon as possible.”

Why is Arlington County bending over backwards to spend taxpayer money furnishing free and/or low-cost legal services to foreign law-breakers? We can’t figure it out. Clearly criminals who have no right to remain in the United States aren’t adding a lot of value to Arlington’s communities. And while \$105,000 is a

mere fraction of Arlington's \$1.5 billion annual budget, those funds could easily go toward the salary for an additional public school teacher, police officer or firefighter – any of which would exert a measurably positive effect.

ARLINGTON IS WORKING WITH EXTREMISTS

The LAJC is a radical anti-borders organization and there is no reason that any city, county or state government should be working with it, much less funding it.

The organization has not only [called](#) for an end to all deportations, it has also advocated complete defunding of both ICE and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). In fact, the LAJC [doesn't appear](#) to want cooperation of any kind between local government and ICE.

According to German sociologist [Max Weber](#), a modern nation requires a political authority that exercises legal power over a defined geographical territory. Without a border a state cannot exist and in the history of humanity, there has never been a borderless nation. Assertions that foreign nationals – absent permission from the U.S. government – have some legal or moral claim to enter and remain in the United States are baseless, as are contentions that immigration enforcement is either unjust or immoral. And any organizations making such proclamations can only be described as extremist.

The other organizations with which the Arlington County Board worked on its Trust Policy are equally radical.

La ColectiVA has [openly called](#) for ICE and CBP to be abolished. And the group appears to be generally anti-law-enforcement, not just anti-immigration-enforcement. It has taken issue with police presence in public schools and is demanding [cop-free schools](#) across northern Virginia. Call us cynical but we question the motives of any organization that advocates eliminating punishment for law-breakers while demanding the abolition of law enforcement.

Like the LAJC and La ColectiVA, the National Immigration Project [has called for](#) the total ban on cooperation between local law enforcement and ICE.

CONCLUSION

While, Washington, D.C., regularly garners national attention for its over-the-top sanctuary policies, nearby Arlington rarely winds up in the limelight. But it turns out DC's suburban neighbor is just as radical as our capital in its efforts to hobble

ICE and help foreign nationals violate our immigration laws. Arlington County Board members and immigration extremists colluded to keep law enforcement from identifying immigration violators and working with ICE to keep them off our streets. Moreover, the Arlington County Board attempted to fly under the radar and keep its action secret. The public now knows about this only because IRLI filed a records request and produced this report.

This kind of backroom skullduggery raises several important questions: Are the Arlington County Board members attempting to help anyone else violate federal law? What other counties, cities and towns across the United States are taking legislative direction from sanctuary city activists? How many of those local governments are also giving direct funding to radical anti-borders organizations?

We can conclude from these Arlington County Board's emails that the fight to protect border jumpers and other immigration violators is no longer confined to our country's major, urban migrant hubs – like Los Angeles, New York and Miami. In your quiet, suburban town, local leaders may be actively collaborating with radical anti-borders activists who wish to abolish ICE and protect foreign nationals who have shown no respect for our laws.

What's even worse is that they're spending your hard earned tax dollars in the process. U.S. citizens pay the salaries of these public officials fully expecting them to protect our communities and improve the quality of our lives. Instead, they spend citizens' hard-earned dollars turning police officers into criminals for doing their jobs and reporting federal crimes to ICE.