

This article
brought to you by:
TimesDispatch.com
Richmond Times-Dispatch
NEW: Get [Movie Showtimes](#) in Entertainment



Blockbuster Online™
The Movie Store
At Your Door.™
Try It FREE

- No Due Dates
- Unlimited DVD Rentals
- PLUS 2 FREE In-Store Rentals Every Month

Laborers cited in loitering crackdown face deportation

Advocates say police action will frighten Hispanic immigrants

The Associated Press

Monday, November 1, 2004

WOODBRIIDGE - Several Hispanic day laborers who were charged in a crackdown on loitering now face deportation.

Some immigration advocates fear the incident has damaged the fragile trust between immigrants and local law-enforcement officials.

Prince William County police arrested 24 people outside a 7-Eleven in Woodbridge. The loitering charge carries a \$100 fine.

But the penalty for many ended up being more severe: Eleven of the workers couldn't prove their identity and were transferred to federal custody. They have been put in an adult detention center in Manassas and face deportation.

The crackdown may discourage immigrants from reporting crimes or working with detectives at a time when millions of dollars are being spent to combat a growing gang problem, according to advocates and some police officials.

"This is exactly what immigrants were afraid of - a bunch of Latinos hanging out and the police come by and pick them up and refer them" to federal immigration agents, said Tim Freilich, managing attorney of the Virginia Justice Center.

"From a policy standpoint, the arrests don't make any sense," he said. "It's not going to solve the issue of day laborers in Woodbridge . . . It's just going to frighten the immigrant community."

The arrests came about three months after a new Virginia law gave state and local police the authority to arrest undocumented immigrants without a warrant. The law, which targeted possible terrorists, was intended to be limited in scope and could be applied only if the immigrant had been convicted of a felony, had been ordered out of the country and was suspected of committing another crime.

But the law incited a much broader reaction of panic and mistrust of local police departments. For example, when the Fairfax County police held a Spanish-language child safety seat demonstration in Herndon, no one from the immigrant community showed up, fearing they would be arrested in an immigration sweep.

Police Capt. Tim Rudy defended the operation, saying the Prince William arrests had nothing to do with the new law. He said he has been fielding complaints every day from customers and businesses about the informal day worker gathering site.

Rudy said his officers had allowed the laborers to solicit jobs there before most businesses open at 9 a.m., but they repeatedly told them to get off the property after then. The warnings went unheeded for months, so Rudy ordered the arrests Oct. 19.

"Women are being harassed, there's urinating in public behind the 7-Eleven, there's trash all over the place," he said. "This was a community-maintenance issue. It had nothing to do with immigration."

This story can be found at:

http://www.timesdispatch.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RTD%2FMGArticle%2FRTD_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=103177886640&path=!news&s=10458559348

[Go Back](#)