



# Immigration Detainers: Legal Issues

**Kate M. Manuel**  
Legislative Attorney

May 29, 2013

**Congressional Research Service**

7-5700

[www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov)

R42690

## Summary

An “immigration detainer” is a document by which U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) advises other law enforcement agencies that it seeks custody of individual aliens whom these agencies are detaining. ICE and its predecessor, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), have used detainers as one means of obtaining custody of aliens for removal proceedings since at least 1950. However, implementation of the Secure Communities program has recently prompted numerous questions about detainers. This program relies upon information sharing between various levels and agencies of government to identify potentially removable aliens.

Prior to 1986, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) did not explicitly address detainers, and the INS appears to have issued detainers pursuant to its “general authority” to guard U.S. borders and boundaries against the illegal entry of aliens, among other things. However, in 1986, Congress amended the INA to address the issuance of detainers for aliens arrested for controlled substance offenses. After the 1986 amendments, INS promulgated two regulations, one addressing the issuance of detainers for controlled substance offenses and the other addressing detainers for other offenses. These regulations were merged in 1997 and currently address various topics, including who may issue detainers and the temporary detention of aliens by other law enforcement agencies. There is also a standard detainer form (Form I-247) that allows ICE to indicate that it has taken actions that could lead to the alien’s removal, and request that another agency take actions that could facilitate removal (e.g., notify ICE prior to releasing the alien).

Some commentators and advocates for immigrants’ rights have asserted that, because the INA addresses only detainers for controlled substance offenses, ICE’s detainer regulations and practices are beyond its statutory authority and, thus, unlawful. The only court to address this issue found otherwise, but several recently filed cases raise the issue anew in other jurisdictions.

Although many states and localities apparently comply with immigration detainers as a matter of comity, questions have also arisen about whether federal law requires them to comply. ICE amended Form I-247 in 2010 to indicate that states and localities are *requested*—rather than *required*—to comply with immigration detainers, and an argument could be made that any attempt to require state and local compliance would violate the Tenth Amendment. However, some have suggested that Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations could still be construed as requiring state and local compliance, and several federal district courts appear to have adopted the view that compliance is mandatory. Other recently filed litigation, in contrast, asserts that states and localities are not—or cannot be—required to comply.

In addition, questions have been raised about who has custody of aliens subject to detainers, and whether the detainer practices of state, local, and/or federal governments impinge upon aliens' constitutional rights, particularly their rights to due process and to be free from unreasonable seizures. Answers to these questions may depend upon the facts and circumstances of the case. For example, courts have found that the filing of a detainer, in itself, does not result in an alien being in federal custody, although aliens could be found to be in federal custody if they are subject to final orders of removal or, potentially, if they are held because of the detainer after they would have been released for their criminal offense. Similarly, courts may be less likely to find a violation of the alien's constitutional rights if the detainer merely requests that the agency notify ICE prior to the alien's release, or if a warrant of arrest in removal proceedings is attached to the detainer, than if the alien is held so that ICE may investigate whether the alien is removable.

# Contents

Introduction..... 1

Background..... 3

Legal Issues ..... 9

    Are ICE’s Detainer Regulations and Practices Within Its Statutory Authority?..... 9

    Are States and Localities Required to Comply with Immigration Detainers?..... 11

    Who Has Custody of Aliens Subject to Detainers? ..... 14

    Do Detainer Practices Violate Aliens’ Constitutional Rights?..... 17

        Are Aliens “Seized” in Violation of Their Constitutional Rights? ..... 19

        Do Detainers Result in Aliens Being Deprived of Liberty Interests Without Due  
        Process of Law? ..... 24

Conclusion ..... 26

# Contacts

Author Contact Information..... 27

## Introduction

An “immigration detainer” is a document by which U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) advises other law enforcement agencies that it seeks custody of individual aliens whom these agencies are detaining.<sup>1</sup> The standard detainer form (Form I-247) allows ICE to indicate that it has taken certain actions that could lead to the alien’s removal (e.g., initiating removal proceedings or an investigation into the alien’s removability). The form also allows ICE to request that the other agency take certain actions that could facilitate removal (e.g., holding the alien temporarily, notifying ICE prior to releasing the alien).<sup>2</sup>

ICE and its predecessor, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), have used detainers as one means of obtaining custody of aliens for purposes of removal proceedings since at least 1950.<sup>3</sup> However, numerous questions about ICE’s use of detainers have recently arisen due, in part, to the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS’s) Secure Communities program, which has resulted in the issuance of more detainers for persons at earlier stages in criminal proceedings than was the practice previously.<sup>4</sup> Secure Communities—which was first implemented in 14 jurisdictions in 2008 and is scheduled for implementation nationwide in 2013—relies upon the sharing of information regarding persons arrested by state and local law enforcement to identify aliens who may be removable.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, the fingerprints of persons arrested by state and local officers are sent to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI’s) Integrated Automatic Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS), which then sends them to ICE’s Automated Biometric

<sup>1</sup> 8 C.F.R. §287.7(a). An “alien” is any person who is not a citizen or national of the United States. INA §101(a)(3), 8 U.S.C. §1101(a)(3). Detainers have allegedly been issued for U.S. citizens, and resulted in their being held so that ICE could investigate their removability and/or assume custody. *See, e.g., Morales v. Chadbourne*, C.A. No. 12-301 M, Complaint for Injunctive and Declaratory Relief and Monetary Damages (D. R.I., filed April 24, 2012). However, federal law does not purport to authorize the issuance of immigration detainers for U.S. citizens, and such cases are outside the scope of this report.

<sup>2</sup> *See, e.g., U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Security, Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action*, DHS Form I-247 (12/12), available at <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/secure-communities/pdf/immigration-detainer-form.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> DHS also obtains custody of aliens for removal purposes through other means. In some cases, ICE has custody because ICE personnel arrested the alien for an immigration violation. In other cases, the alien is transferred to DHS custody without the issuance of a detainer. For example, an alien could be arrested upon his or her release from state or local custody by state or local personnel participating in the 287(g) program, or an “Order to Detain” (Form I-203) could be lodged with a local jail that also holds prisoners on behalf of ICE pursuant to an inter-governmental service agreement (IGSA). *See, e.g., Ricketts v. Palm Beach County Sheriff*, 985 So.2d 591, 592 (Fla. Dist. Ct. App. 2008) (transfer of custody by means of Form I-203); Carrie L. Arnold, *Racial Profiling in Immigration Enforcement: State and Local Agreements to Enforce Federal Immigration Law*, 49 ARIZ. L. REV. 113, 127-29 (2007) (discussing arrests by personnel participating in the 287(g) program). The 287(g) program, discussed in more detail below, relies upon specially trained state and local officers to perform specific functions relative to the investigation, apprehension, or detention of aliens, during a predetermined time frame and under federal supervision. *See infra* note 14 and accompanying text.

<sup>4</sup> *See, e.g., Brizuela v. Feliciano*, No. 3:12CV226, Memorandum of Law in Support of Motion for Order to Show Cause and Leave to Propound Precertification Discovery Requests (filed D. Conn., February 22, 2012), at 7 (“Immigration detainers are an integral part of the Secure Communities program; indeed, the program depends on immigration detainers to work.”); *Nat’l Day Laborer Organizing Network v. U.S. ICE*, No. 1:10-cv-3488, Declaration of Ann Benson in Support of Plaintiffs’ Opposition to Defendants’ Motion for Stay (filed S.D.N.Y., November 18, 2011) (“The belief among the advocacy community is that if a local jurisdiction refuses to honor detainer requests, then the consequences of Secure Communities can be averted.”).

<sup>5</sup> *See, e.g., U.S. ICE, Secure Communities: The Basics*, available at [http://www.ice.gov/secure\\_communities](http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities) (last accessed: August 20, 2012).

Identification System (IDENT).<sup>6</sup> This system automatically notifies ICE personnel whenever the fingerprints of persons arrested by state and local officers match those of a person previously encountered and fingerprinted by immigration officials. ICE personnel then review other databases to determine whether the person is here illegally or otherwise removable, and may issue detainers for any aliens who appear removable.<sup>7</sup>

DHS claims to prioritize “criminal aliens,” those who pose a threat to public safety, and repeat immigration violators for removal through Secure Communities,<sup>8</sup> and the Director of ICE has further indicated that, among “criminal aliens,” the focus should be upon those convicted of “aggravated felonies,” as defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA);<sup>9</sup> those convicted of other felonies; and those convicted of three or more misdemeanors.<sup>10</sup> However, some commentators have expressed concern that detainers have been issued for persons who have not been convicted of any offense, or whose sole offense was a misdemeanor.<sup>11</sup> Because of these and related concerns, several jurisdictions have adopted policies of declining immigration detainer requests for at least some aliens.<sup>12</sup> Several lawsuits have also recently been filed challenging the detainer practices of state, local, or federal governments.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, some Members of

<sup>6</sup> DHS has taken the position that this sharing of information “fulfills a 2002 Congressional mandate for the FBI to share information with ICE, and is consistent with a 2008 federal law that instructs ICE to identify criminal aliens for removal.” U.S. ICE, Secure Communities: The Secure Communities Process, *available at* [http://www.ice.gov/secure\\_communities/](http://www.ice.gov/secure_communities/) (last accessed: August 20, 2012). Others, however, have questioned whether this sharing of information is authorized by federal law. *See, e.g.,* Brizuela v. Feliciano, Memorandum of Law, *supra* note 4, at 7 (asserting that ICE has “failed to identify adequate legal authority” for Secure Communities).

<sup>7</sup> ICE is not required to issue a detainer in the event of a match, and IDENT can only be used to identify aliens whose fingerprint records have been digitized. *See* Secure Communities: The Secure Communities Process, *supra* note 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> As used here, “aggravated felony” includes specific offenses or types of offenses listed in Section 101 of the INA. *See* INA §101(a)(43), 8 U.S.C. §1101(a)(43) (listing murder, rape, or sexual abuse of a minor; illicit trafficking in controlled substances or firearms; and “crimes of violence” for which the term of imprisonment is at least one year, among other offenses).

<sup>10</sup> John Morton, Director, U.S. ICE, Civil Immigration Enforcement: Priorities for the Apprehension, Detention, and Removal of Aliens, March 2, 2011, *available at* <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/news/releases/2011/110302washingtondc.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> *See, e.g.,* Comments on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Draft Detainer Policy, *available at* <http://cliniclegal.org/sites/default/files/NGO%20Detainer%20Comments%20Final%2010%2001%202010.pdf>. These comments were made in response to changes in ICE’s detainer policy proposed in 2010. Critics of Secure Communities have also alleged that state and local officials hold aliens longer than the 48 hours (excluding weekends and federal holidays) purportedly authorized by the detainer form and regulations, and that the program results in racial profiling and negatively affects community policing strategies. *See, e.g., id.*; William Fisher, U.S. Sheriff Abused Immigration “Detainer,” *Lawsuit Charges*, Inter Press Service, April 23, 2010, *available at* <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=51173>.

<sup>12</sup> *See, e.g.,* Policy for Responding to ICE Detainers, September 7, 2011, *available at* [http://cookcountygov.com/ll\\_lib\\_pub\\_cook/cook\\_ordinance.aspx?WindowArgs=1501](http://cookcountygov.com/ll_lib_pub_cook/cook_ordinance.aspx?WindowArgs=1501) (amending Section 46-37 of the Cook County, Illinois, Code); *Santa Clara County to Stop Honoring Immigration Detainers for Low-Level Offenders*, LOS ANGELES TIMES, October 18, 2011, *available at* <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2011/10/santa-clara-county-to-stop-honoring-immigration-detainers-for-low-level-offenders-.html> (reporting that Santa Clara County, California, has adopted a policy of only honoring ICE detainers placed on those accused of “serious and violent felonies”); Brent Begin, *San Francisco County Jail Won’t Hold Inmates for ICE*, SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER, May 5, 2011, *available at* <http://www.sfoxaminer.com/local/2011/05/san-francisco-county-jail-won-t-hold-inmates-ice> (reporting that the San Francisco Sheriff has instructed officers not to honor detainers for persons arrested for “petty offenses”).

<sup>13</sup> *See, e.g.,* Morales v. Chadbourne, Complaint, *supra* note 1; Brizuela v. Feliciano, No. 3:12-cv-00226, Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus and Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief (filed D. Conn., February 13, 2012); Jimenez Moreno v. Napolitano, No. 1:2011cv05452, Complaint for Injunctive and Declaratory Relief and Petition for a Writ of Habeas Corpus (filed N.D. Ill., August 11, 2011); Uroza v. Salt Lake County, No. 11-0713, First Amended (continued...)

recent Congresses have introduced legislation that would authorize certain state and local officials to issue detainers for or hold certain aliens.<sup>14</sup>

By way of background, this report surveys the various authorities governing immigration detainers, including the standard detainer form (Form I-247) sent by ICE to other law enforcement agencies. The report also discusses key legal issues raised by immigration detainers, including (1) whether DHS's detainer regulations and practices are beyond its statutory authority; (2) whether states and localities are required to comply with immigration detainers; (3) who has custody of aliens subject to detainers; and (4) whether detainer practices violate aliens' constitutional rights. In considering these topics, it is important to note that Form I-247 and DHS's detainer practices have changed frequently over the past two years,<sup>15</sup> and that decisions on the merits have not yet been issued in many cases challenging the use of detainers in conjunction with the Secure Communities program.<sup>16</sup> This program potentially raises more issues regarding ICE's use of detainers than were raised by earlier programs and practices because it takes a broader approach to identifying aliens who may be subject to removal.<sup>17</sup>

## Background

ICE and its predecessor, the INS, have long issued detainers for potentially removable aliens, although the case law mentioning such detainers may provide only a partial picture of INS's practices, in particular.<sup>18</sup> For example, in a 1950 decision, a federal district court addressed a

---

(...continued)

Complaint for Declaratory Judgment and Monetary Damages (filed D. Utah, March 26, 2011); *Galarza v. Szalczyk*, No. 10-6815, Complaint (filed E.D. Pa., November 19, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> Criminal Alien Removal Act of 2011, H.R. 932, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., §2(d)(3)(A)-(B) (authorizing officials in states participating in the Criminal Alien Program (CAP) to issue detainers “allow[ing] an alien who completes a term of incarceration within the State to be detained by the State prison until personnel from [ICE are] able to take the alien into custody,” as well as “hold” aliens who are unlawfully present or removable for a period of up to 14 days after they complete a term of incarceration within the state in order to “effectuate” their transfer to federal custody); Scott Gardner Act, H.R. 3808, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., §2 (authorizing state and local officers to issue detainers for aliens who are present without authorization and apprehended for driving while intoxicated). Certain state and local officials may currently issue immigration detainers if their jurisdiction participates in the 287(g) Program, and the terms of the agreement between their jurisdiction and the federal government authorize this. *See, e.g.*, 8 C.F.R. §287.7(b)(8); *Torres v. Bureau of Immigration & Customs Enforcement*, 347 Fed. App'x 47 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2009). However, their doing so involves an exercise of delegated federal authority, as opposed to state authority. Under the 287(g) program, state and local officers whose jurisdictions have entered written agreements with the federal government may, subject to certain conditions, enforce federal immigration law. Under CAP, in contrast, ICE officers assigned to federal, state, and local prisons identify criminal aliens in order to facilitate their removal. For more on these programs, see CRS Report R42057, *Interior Immigration Enforcement: Programs Targeting Criminal Aliens*, by Marc R. Rosenblum and William A. Kandel.

<sup>15</sup> *See infra* notes 45-48 and 77 and accompanying text.

<sup>16</sup> *See supra* note 13.

<sup>17</sup> *See, e.g.*, *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petitioner's Memorandum of Law, *supra* note 4, at 7 (arguing that “Secure Communities will automatically result in an immigration status check for every individual arrested anywhere in the state, no matter how minor the charges against the individual or their eventual disposition. Those status checks will enlarge the total pool of individuals against whom detainers will be lodged.”); Christopher N. Lasch, *Enforcing the Limits of the Executive's Authority to Issue Immigration Detainers*, 35 WM. MITCHELL L. REV. 164, 176 (2008/2009) (suggesting that, with Secure Communities, ICE only needs state and local assistance in obtaining custody of removable aliens, not in identifying them).

<sup>18</sup> The first reference to “immigration detainers” in federal regulations appears to have been in 1962, when the Department of Justice issued regulations addressing the parole of prisoners subject to deportation. *See* Dep't of Justice, (continued...)

challenge to the legality of a deportation order for an alien who was the subject of an immigration detainer requesting his delivery “to the custody of the immigration authorities at the time sentence is fulfilled in the state institute.”<sup>19</sup> Later, in a 1975 decision, the Board of Immigration Appeals, the highest administrative body for interpreting and applying immigration laws, heard an alien’s challenge to the conditions under which federal prison authorities held him, allegedly as the result of an immigration detainer which requested that the prison notify INS at least 30 days prior to his release.<sup>20</sup> Between them, these two cases illustrate INS’s use of detainers to request that a law enforcement agency transfer an alien to INS custody at the completion of the alien’s criminal sentence, or notify INS prior to the alien’s release. However, they do not indicate whether INS used detainers for other purposes, such as to request that a person be held after he or she would otherwise have been released for any criminal offense so that INS could investigate the person’s removability and/or take custody.

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) did not expressly address the issuance of detainers prior to 1986. However, the INS appears to have issued detainers prior to this date pursuant to various powers and responsibilities delegated to it by the INA. Specifically, the INA (1) grants the Attorney General (currently the Secretary of Homeland Security) “the power and duty to control and guard the borders and boundaries of the United States against the illegal entry of aliens;”<sup>21</sup> (2) establishes certain categories of aliens who are barred from admission to the United States, or may be removed from the United States after their admission;<sup>22</sup> and (3) generally grants immigration officials broad discretion as to which aliens are removed from the United States.<sup>23</sup> The INS cited all these provisions, among others, as authority when it ultimately promulgated regulations governing the issuance of detainers, as discussed below,<sup>24</sup> and it seems to have consistently viewed these provisions as broadly authorizing its detainer practices.<sup>25</sup> Neither INS

---

(...continued)

Prescribing Regulations of the United States Board of Parole and Youth Correction Division of the Board, 27 *Federal Register* 8487 (August 24, 1962). Later regulations also refer to “deportation detainers.” See, e.g., Dep’t of Justice, Bureau of Prisons, Control Custody, Care, Treatment, and Instruction of Inmates, 47 *Federal Register* 47168 (October 22, 1982).

<sup>19</sup> *Slavik v. Miller*, 89 F. Supp. 575, 576 (W.D. Pa. 1950) (also noting that “a detainer has been lodged for the body of the petitioner at the time that the fulfillment of the state sentence has expired”).

<sup>20</sup> *In re Lehder*, 15 I. & N. Dec. 159 (February 7, 1975). As a general matter, aliens are to complete any criminal sentence imposed upon them prior to removal. See 8 U.S.C. §1226(c)(1) (providing that the Secretary of Homeland Security is to take certain deportable aliens into custody “when the alien is released, without regard to whether the alien is released on parole, supervised release, or probation”).

<sup>21</sup> INA §103(a)(5), 8 U.S.C. §1103(a)(5).

<sup>22</sup> INA §212, 8 U.S.C. §1182 (grounds of inadmissibility); INA §237, 8 U.S.C. §1227 (grounds for removal).

<sup>23</sup> INA §242, 8 U.S.C. §1252 (limiting judicial review of certain decisions made by immigration officers and immigration judges).

<sup>24</sup> See *infra* notes 30-32 and accompanying text.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., Dep’t of Justice, INS, Enhancing the Enforcement Authority of Immigration Officers, 59 *Federal Register* 42406 (August 17, 1994) (“[Some] commentators stated that the authority for issuance of detainers in §§242.2(a)(1) and 287.7(a)(1) of the proposed rule was overly broad because the authority to issue detainers is limited by section 287(d) of the Act to persons arrested for controlled substance offenses. This comment overlooked the general authority of the Service to detain any individual subject to exclusion or deportation proceedings. See 8 U.S.C. 1225(b), 1252(a)(1). The detainer authority of these sections of the proposed rule were promulgated pursuant to this general authority. The statutory provision cited by the commentators places special requirements on the Service regarding the detention of individuals arrested for controlled substance offenses, but does not delimit the general detainer authority of the Service.”).



nor ICE appears to have relied upon the “inherent authority” of law enforcement to issue detainers, although some jurisdictions have recognized such authority.<sup>26</sup>

Then, Congress enacted the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, which, among other things, amended Section 287 of the INA to address the issuance of detainers for aliens arrested for “violation[s] of any law relating to controlled substances.”<sup>27</sup> Section 287 generally specifies the powers of immigration officers and employees<sup>28</sup> and, as amended, provides that

[i]n the case of an alien who is arrested by a Federal, State, or local law enforcement official for a violation of any law relating to controlled substances, if the official (or another official)—

(1) has reason to believe that the alien may not have been lawfully admitted to the United States or otherwise is not lawfully present in the United States,

(2) expeditiously informs an appropriate officer or employee of the Service authorized and designated by the Attorney General of the arrest and of the facts concerning the status of the alien, and

(3) requests the Service to determine promptly whether or not to issue a detainer to detain the alien, the officer or employee of the Service shall promptly determine whether or not to issue such a detainer. If a detainer is issued and the alien is not otherwise detained by Federal, State, or local officials, the Attorney General shall effectively and expeditiously take custody of the alien.<sup>29</sup>

After the 1986 amendments, the INS amended its regulations to address the issuance of detainers. The INS initially promulgated two separate regulations, one (codified in 8 C.F.R. §287.7) governing detainers for controlled substance offenses and another (codified in 8 C.F.R. §242.2) governing detainers for other offenses.<sup>30</sup> The final versions of these two regulations were virtually identical,<sup>31</sup> and in 1997, the two regulations were merged into one.<sup>32</sup> This regulation was located

---

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., *Hicks v. Gravett*, 849 S.W.2d 946, 948 (Ark. 1993) (noting that a lower court had found that a sheriff has inherent authority to lodge a detainer requesting that a federal prison hold the plaintiff to serve his state sentence when he completes his federal sentence). The appellate court affirmed the judgment of the lower court without reaching this issue. However, it did find that the plaintiff’s mandamus action failed, in part, because he could not establish a “specific legal right” whose performance could be ordered by the court based on his assertion that no statute authorized the sheriff to issue detainers. *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> P.L. 99-570, §1751(d), 100 Stat. 3207-47 to 3207-48 (October 27, 1986). Section 287 of the INA is codified at 8 U.S.C. §1357(d). The act did not define the term “controlled substance” for purposes of Section 287, although it did for other sections of the INA. See Dep’t of Justice, INS, *Documentary Requirements: Nonimmigrants; Waivers; Admission of Certain Inadmissible Aliens; Parole Judicial Recommendations Against Deportation Proceedings to Determine Deportability of Aliens in the United States: Apprehension, Custody, Hearing, and Appeal Field Officers; Powers and Duties: Interim Rule with Request for Comments*, 52 *Federal Register* 16370 (May 5, 1987). However, INS promulgated regulations that define this term, for purposes of Section 287, to mean “the same as that referenced in the Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. 801 et seq., and shall include any substance contained in Schedules I through V of 21 CFR 1308.1 et seq.” 8 C.F.R. §287.1(f).

<sup>28</sup> See generally 8 C.F.R. §287.5 (defining which immigration officers may exercise specific powers).

<sup>29</sup> INA §287(d)(1)-(3), 8 U.S.C. §1357(d)(1)-(3).

<sup>30</sup> Dep’t of Justice, INS, *Documentary Requirements: Nonimmigrants; Waivers; Admission of Certain Inadmissible Aliens; Parole Judicial Recommendations Against Deportation Proceedings to Determine Deportability of Aliens in the United States: Apprehension, Custody, Hearing, and Appeal Field Officers; Powers and Duties: Final Rule*, 53 *Federal Register* 9281 (March 22, 1988).

<sup>31</sup> Specifically, the two final regulations differed in terms of (1) whether they included a definition of “conviction,” and (continued...)

at 8 C.F.R. §287.7, the former location of the regulation governing detainers for controlled substance offenses. However, it noted that detainers “are issued pursuant to sections 236 and 287” of the INA.<sup>33</sup> Section 236 authorizes or requires the detention of certain aliens pending their removal,<sup>34</sup> while Section 287 generally specifies the powers of immigration officers and employees (as well as expressly authorizes the issuance of detainers for controlled substance offenses).<sup>35</sup>

These detainer regulations currently provide that “[a]ny authorized immigration officer may at any time issue a Form I-247 ... to any other Federal, State, or local law enforcement agency,”<sup>36</sup> and identify specific personnel authorized to issue detainers (e.g., deportation officers; immigration inspectors; state and local officials acting pursuant to a 287(g) agreement with DHS).<sup>37</sup> These personnel are the same personnel who are authorized to make warrantless arrests for violations of federal immigration law under certain conditions, as discussed below.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the regulations:

- require that other agencies requesting the issuance of a detainer provide DHS with “all documentary records and information” related to the alien’s status;
- call for the temporary detention of aliens not otherwise detained by a criminal justice agency for up to 48 hours (excluding weekends and federal holidays) so that ICE may assume custody;<sup>39</sup> and
- specify that DHS is not financially responsible for an alien’s detention unless it issues a detainer for, or assumes custody of, the alien.<sup>40</sup>

(...continued)

(2) the authorities cited for their promulgation. The regulation governing the issuance of detainers for offenses not involving controlled substances included a definition of “conviction” and cited as authority for its promulgation INA §242 (currently §239) (requiring that deportation proceedings be begun “as expeditiously as possible” after an alien’s conviction for a deportable offense); INA §103 (powers of the Attorney General (later Secretary of Homeland Security)); INA §212 (grounds of inadmissibility); INA §237 (grounds for removal); INA §242 (judicial review of orders of removal); and a provision on adjustment of status that was subsequently repealed. The regulation governing the issuance of detainers for controlled substance offenses, in contrast, did not contain a definition of “conviction” and cited as authority for its promulgation INA §287; INA §103 (powers of the Attorney General (later Secretary of Homeland Security)); INA §212 (grounds of inadmissibility); INA §235 (inspection by immigration officers); INA §236 (apprehension and detention of aliens); INA §237 (grounds for removal); and INA §242 (judicial review of orders of removal). The interim version of these regulations had differed in additional ways. *See 52 Federal Register* at 16370.

<sup>32</sup> Dep’t of Justice, INS, Inspection and Expedited Removal of Aliens; Detention and Removal of Aliens; Conduct of Removal Proceedings; Asylum Procedures, 62 *Federal Register* 10312, 10392 (March 6, 1997).

<sup>33</sup> 8 C.F.R. §287.7(a).

<sup>34</sup> In particular, Section 236(a) authorizes the arrest and detention of an alien, on a warrant issued by the Secretary of Homeland Security, pending a decision on whether the alien is to be removed from the United States, while Section 236(c) requires the detention of aliens who are inadmissible or removable because they have committed certain criminal offenses. *See* INA §236(a) & (c), 8 U.S.C. §1226(a) & (c).

<sup>35</sup> *See supra* note 28 and accompanying text.

<sup>36</sup> 8 C.F.R. §287.7(a).

<sup>37</sup> 8 C.F.R. §287.7(b)(1)-(8).

<sup>38</sup> *See infra* note 134 and accompanying text.

<sup>39</sup> This provision is implicated in many of the legal questions surrounding current detainer practices. For example, there is some question as to whether the regulation “requires” states and localities to comply with immigration detainers. *See infra* “Are States and Localities Required to Comply with Immigration Detainers”. There are also questions about what authority underlies the apparent seizures of aliens’ persons contemplated by this provision. *See infra* “Are Aliens ‘Seized’ in Violation of Their Constitutional Rights?”

The standard detainer form (Form I-247) has apparently been in use since at least 1984,<sup>41</sup> and has been amended several times, including recently in response to criticisms of the Secure Communities program.<sup>42</sup> This form enables ICE to notify another agency that it has (1) initiated an investigation to determine whether an alien is subject to removal; (2) initiated removal proceedings and served a Notice to Appear or other charging document on the alien; (3) served a warrant of arrest for removal proceedings; or (4) obtained an order of deportation or removal for the alien.<sup>43</sup> It also allows ICE to request that the other agency take one or more of the following actions:

maintain custody of the alien for a period not to exceed 48 hours (excluding weekends and federal holidays) beyond the time when the alien would have been released from its custody so as to allow DHS to take custody of the alien;

provide a copy of the detainer to the alien who is the subject of the detainer;

notify DHS at least 30 days prior to the alien's release;

notify DHS of the alien's death, hospitalization, or transfer to another institution;

consider this request operative only upon the alien's conviction;

cancel a previously placed detainer.<sup>44</sup>

The option of requesting that a copy of the detainer be provided to the alien who is the subject of the detainer was added in June 2011,<sup>45</sup> in response to concerns that aliens who were subject to detainers were not always aware of this fact.<sup>46</sup> The option of requesting that the detainer be considered operative only upon the alien's conviction was also added in June 2011,<sup>47</sup> because of criticism that ICE has issued detainers for aliens whose charges were dismissed, or who were found not guilty.<sup>48</sup>

ICE has also issued guidance and made other changes pertaining to its use of detainers in response to allegations that the Secure Communities program has resulted in infringement of aliens' rights by state and local officials, and that ICE issues detainers without sufficient evidence

---

(...continued)

<sup>40</sup> 8 C.F.R. §287.7(c)-(e).

<sup>41</sup> Office of Justice Assistance, Research & Stats., State Reimbursement Program for Incarcerated Mariel-Cubans, 49 *Federal Register* 38719 (October 1, 1984).

<sup>42</sup> See *infra* notes 45-48 and accompanying text.

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Dep't of Homeland Security, Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action, *supra* note 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> U.S. Dep't of Homeland Security, Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action, DHS Form I-247 (6/11) (copy on file with the author).

<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., Jimenez Moreno v. Napolitano, Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 22 ("The I-247 detainer form does not require notice of the immigration detainers to the Plaintiffs/Petitioners."); Morales v. Chadbourne, Complaint, *supra* note 1, at ¶ 45 (noting that the plaintiff in this case was not aware that a detainer had been lodged against her until she was arraigned for a state offense).

<sup>47</sup> Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action, *supra* note 45.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., Comments on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Draft Detainer Policy, *supra* note 11, at 1 ("Issuance is often based on mere arrests for less serious crimes including minor misdemeanors rather than after convictions for serious crimes which pose a threat to public safety.").

of individuals' removability.<sup>49</sup> First, in August 2010, ICE issued an interim policy on detainers that prohibits immigration officers from issuing detainers unless a law enforcement agency has "exercised its independent authority to arrest the alien,"<sup>50</sup> as well as discourages officers from "relying" on the hold period purportedly authorized by the detainer form and federal regulations.<sup>51</sup> Then, in December 2011, ICE established a toll-free hotline that detained individuals can call if they believe they may be U.S. citizens or victims of a crime.<sup>52</sup> More recently, in December 2012, ICE issued guidance instructing that detainers should only be issued when the subject of the detainer (1) is reasonably believed to be an alien subject to removal from the United States, and (2) has been convicted of or charged with certain offenses (e.g., felony offenses); has engaged in certain illegal conduct (e.g., illegally reentered after a previous removal); or poses a "significant risk" to national security, border security, or public safety.<sup>53</sup>

The issuance of a detainer for an alien begins a process that could potentially result in the removal of the alien, although ICE does not pick up or attempt to remove all aliens for whom it issues detainers.<sup>54</sup> ICE issued 270,988 detainers in FY2009 and 201,778 detainers in the first eleven months of FY2010.<sup>55</sup> It is unclear, however, how many individuals subject to detainers were ultimately removed.<sup>56</sup> It is also unclear how many of these detainers resulted in an alien being held by state or local authorities beyond the time when he or she would otherwise have been released from custody.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Id.* Whether there is sufficient evidence of individuals' removability may help determine whether any seizure of the alien's person that may result when the alien is held pursuant to a detainer is permissible under the Constitution. See *infra* "Are Aliens 'Seized' in Violation of Their Constitutional Rights?"

<sup>50</sup> U.S. ICE, Interim Policy Number 10074.1: Detainers, August 2, 2010, at §4.1 (copy on file with the author). In addition, this provision specifically notes that officers shall not issue detainers for aliens who have been temporarily stopped by a law enforcement agency (e.g., in a roadside or *Terry* stop). The alleged issuance of detainers for aliens who had been temporarily stopped, but were not arrested, by law enforcement was among the issues raised in the *Committee for Immigrants Rights of Sonoma County v. County of Sonoma* litigation, discussed below. See *infra* notes 68-72 and accompanying text. ICE further amended Sections 4.2 and 4.5 of this interim policy in December 2012. See John Morton, Director, Civil Immigration Enforcement: Guidance on the Use of Detainers in the Federal, State, Local, and Tribal Criminal Justice Systems, Dec. 21, 2012, available at <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/detention-reform/pdf/detainer-policy.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> Interim Policy Number 10074.1, *supra* note 50, at §4.4.

<sup>52</sup> DHS, U.S. ICE, News Release: ICE Establishes a Hotline for Detained Individuals, Issues New Detainer Form, December 29, 2011, available at <http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/1112/111229washingtondc.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Guidance on the Use of Detainers, *supra* note 50.

<sup>54</sup> Moreover, even when ICE institutes removal proceedings, the alien could potentially be eligible for relief from removal, or successfully contest his or her removability. See, e.g., *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 10 (noting that the alien plans to apply for relief from removal, contest his removal, and seek judicial review of any order of removal).

<sup>55</sup> *Jimenez Moreno v. Napolitano*, Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 28.

<sup>56</sup> Some of these detainers appear to have been issued for citizens, who are not subject to removal, and certain individuals have been subject to multiple detainer requests. See, e.g., *Morales v. Chadbourne*, Complaint, *supra* note 1.

<sup>57</sup> One recently filed petition challenging state and local detainer practices states that, "[o]n information and belief, on a single day in December 2011, ... there were approximately 130 pretrial detainees and approximately 360 post-conviction detainees" in Connecticut Department of Correction custody with immigration detainers lodged against them. *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 30.a. However, there is no indication of how many of these persons are being held solely on the basis of the detainer.

## Legal Issues

Largely because the Secure Communities program has resulted in the issuance of more detainers for persons at earlier stages in criminal proceedings than was the practice previously, numerous questions have recently been raised about detainers. These include (1) whether DHS's detainer regulations and practices are beyond its statutory authority; (2) whether states and localities are required to comply with immigration detainers; (3) who has custody of aliens subject to detainers; and (4) whether detainer practices violate aliens' constitutional rights.<sup>58</sup> However, because the Secure Communities program is relatively new, and arguably takes a broader approach to identifying aliens who may be subject to removal than prior programs and practices,<sup>59</sup> there is little case law definitely answering these questions. Various arguments that have been made by plaintiffs and commentators are noted below, but it is often unclear how courts might rule when confronting specific issues. In addition, recently filed suits challenging the use of detainers have varied considerably in the facts and circumstances of the case, the nature of the challenge, and the relief sought. For example, in some cases, individuals who are allegedly U.S. citizens—and, thus, not subject to removal—have brought actions in habeas corpus seeking their release, or have sued for monetary damages for their unlawful detention.<sup>60</sup> In other cases, plaintiffs who include potentially removable aliens have brought class action suits seeking a declaration that use of detainers to request that persons be held so that ICE may investigate their removability is unconstitutional,<sup>61</sup> or have requested injunctions barring state or local governments from holding people pursuant to immigration detainers.<sup>62</sup>

### Are ICE's Detainer Regulations and Practices Within Its Statutory Authority?

Because the INA only addresses detainers for controlled substance offenses,<sup>63</sup> some commentators and advocates for immigrant rights have asserted that ICE's current detainer

<sup>58</sup> These are arguably the major issues that have been raised by the cases filed to date. Individual cases have, however, raised additional issues that are outside the scope of this report. *See, e.g.,* Morales v. Chadbourne, Complaint, *supra* note 1 (alleging that the plaintiff was the victim of intentional torts and negligence, and that she was denied equal protection of the law because her information was reported to ICE “solely on the basis of her place of birth, foreign-sounding name, Hispanic appearance, and/or English language ability”).

<sup>59</sup> *See supra* note 17 and accompanying text.

<sup>60</sup> *See, e.g.,* Morales v. Chadbourne, Complaint, *supra* note 1 (seeking monetary damages for various torts and violations of the plaintiff's constitutional rights, as well as to permanently enjoin certain officials from issuing a detainer for her, or holding her pursuant to a detainer). The writ of habeas corpus has historically “served as a means of reviewing the legality of Executive detention.” Rasul v. Bush, 542 U.S. 466, 474 (2004) (citing *INS v. St. Cyr*, 533 U.S. 289, 301 (2001)). Aliens subject to immigration detainers have brought numerous challenges to their detention in habeas proceedings. *See infra* “Who Has Custody of Aliens Subject to Detainers”.

<sup>61</sup> Uroza v. Salt Lake County, First Amended Complaint, *supra* note 13.

<sup>62</sup> *See, e.g.,* Brizuela v. Feliciano, Petition, *supra* note 13 (a proposed class action seeking to enjoin the state of Connecticut from “detain[ing] any individual solely on the basis of an immigration detainer”). Partly in response to this suit, the state recently adopted a protocol for officers to follow when determining whether to hold a person pursuant to an immigration detainer. *See, e.g., Connecticut Adopts Protocols for Dealing with ICE's Secure Communities Program*, WEST HARTFORD NEWS, March 29, 2012, available at <http://www.westhartfordnews.com/articles/2012/03/29/news/doc4f72775aacb8c050176943.txt> (noting that officers are to determine whether ICE has started removal proceedings, has issued a warrant for the person, or has obtained a removal order, among other things).

<sup>63</sup> *See supra* notes 21-29 and accompanying text.

regulations and practices exceed its statutory authority and, thus, are unlawful.<sup>64</sup> In particular, those making this argument note that (1) these regulations and practices entail the issuance of detainers for offenses that do not involve controlled substances; and (2) ICE personnel are generally the ones determining whether to issue a detainer.<sup>65</sup> Both things are, they assert, contrary to Section 287 of the INA, which they take to mean that ICE is *only* to determine whether to issue a detainer for an alien arrested for a controlled substance offense *if and when* requested to do so by a “Federal, State, or local law enforcement officer” or “another official.”<sup>66</sup> Federal immigration authorities, in contrast, have taken a broader view of their authority, issuing detainers for offenses that do not involve controlled substances without a request from a non-immigration officer. In particular, the INS seems to have taken the position that holds are permissible pursuant to its general authority to make warrantless arrests for immigration violations, discussed below, and not Section 287’s detainer provisions.<sup>67</sup>

The only court to have addressed this issue to date found that DHS’s detainer regulations are within its statutory authority.<sup>68</sup> The U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California did so by reviewing DHS’s regulations in light of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Chevron, U.S.A. v. Natural Resources Defense Council*, which established a two-step test for judicial review of an agency’s construction of a statute which it administers: (1) Has Congress directly spoken to the precise question at issue, and (2) If not, is the agency’s reasonable interpretation of the statute consistent with the purposes of the statute?<sup>69</sup> Applying *Chevron*, the court first found that the DHS regulations were not “facially invalid,” or contrary to the unambiguously expressed intent of Congress. According to the court:

The fact that §[287] does not expressly authorize ICE to issue detainers for violations of laws other than laws relating to controlled substances hardly amounts to the kind of unambiguous expression of congressional intent that would remove the agency’s discretion at Chevron step one. Rather, the court finds that because Congress left a statutory gap for the agency to fill,

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., Comments on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Draft Detainer Policy, *supra* note 11, at 12; Jimenez Moreno v. Napolitano, Complaint, *supra* note 13. This argument would suggest that either (1) INS lacked authority to issue detainers for any offense prior to 1986, when Congress granted it authority to issue detainers for controlled substance offenses, or (2) INS had authority to issue detainers for any offense prior to 1986, but Congress impliedly repealed this authority by expressly authorizing the issuance of detainers for controlled substance offenses. See *Enforcing the Limits of the Executive’s Authority to Issue Immigration Detainers*, *supra* note 17, at 191-92 (further suggesting that the detainer provisions in Section 287 would have been superfluous if INS had “general authority” to issue detainers).

<sup>65</sup> See, e.g., *Enforcing the Limits of the Executive’s Authority to Issue Immigration Detainers*, *supra* note 17, at 177.

<sup>66</sup> They further note that immigration officers do not constitute “Federal law enforcement officers” or “another official,” as those terms are used in Section 287, and so cannot be the ones to request that ICE determine whether to issue a detainer. *Id.* at 187-89 (resorting to canons of statutory interpretation, as well as the legislative history of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, in asserting that “another official” means another officer like the arresting officer, not an immigration officer).

<sup>67</sup> See *infra* note 135 and accompanying text.

<sup>68</sup> *Committee for Immigrant Rights of Sonoma County v. County of Sonoma*, 644 F. Supp. 2d 1177 (N.D. Cal. 2009). Certain of the plaintiffs’ claims not based on the use of detainers survived the defendants’ motion to dismiss and subsequent motion for reconsideration, and have since been settled. See generally *Committee for Immigrant Rights*, No. C 08-4220 RS, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 63726 (N.D. Cal., June 16, 2011).

<sup>69</sup> 644 F. Supp. 2d at 1196 (quoting *Chevron*, 467 U.S. 837, 842-43 (1984)). If Congress has spoken directly to the issue, “that is the end of the matter,” and the second step does not factor into the analysis. *Id.* However, when Congress has not spoken directly to the issue, courts typically defer to an agency’s reasonable interpretation of its governing statute, and may substitute their own interpretation of the statute only where the agency’s interpretation is unreasonable or contrary to the discernible intent of Congress. *Id.*

Chevron step two requires the court to defer to the agency's reasonable interpretation of the statute so long as the interpretation is consistent with the purposes of the statute.<sup>70</sup>

The court further found that DHS's regulations are "consistent with the purpose of the statute" and "not contrary to the discernible intent of Congress ... [g]iven the broad authority vested in the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish such regulations as she deems necessary for carrying out her authority to administer and enforce laws relating to the immigration and naturalization of aliens."<sup>71</sup> Here, the court specifically noted that the detainer provisions in Section 287 of the INA are to be construed "simply [as] placing special requirements on officials issuing detainers for a violation of any law relating to controlled substances, not as expressly limiting the issuance of immigration detainers solely to individuals violating laws relating to controlled substances."<sup>72</sup>

The question of whether DHS's detainer regulations and practices are beyond its statutory authority has, however, persisted despite this decision. For example, certain recently filed suits allege that the government's "application of the immigration detainer regulations and issuance of detainers ... exceeds [its] ... statutory authority."<sup>73</sup> It remains to be seen how other courts might view such arguments and what significance, if any, reviewing courts might attach to the legislative history of the 1986 amendments, which was apparently not considered by the California district court. Although this history is sparse, a statement by the sponsor of the 1986 amendments read on the floor in the House could potentially be construed as indicating that these amendments were intended to expand—rather than restrict—the use of detainers by requiring immigration officers to at least consider issuing detainers when requested to do so by other law enforcement officers. According to this statement, the amendments responded to complaints from state and local officers that INS did not "issue judgment on a suspect's citizenship fast enough to allow the authorities to continue to detain him," and sought to compel INS to take "the necessary actions to detain the suspect and process the case."<sup>74</sup>

## **Are States and Localities Required to Comply with Immigration Detainers?**

The arguable uncertainty<sup>75</sup> over whether states and localities are required to honor immigration detainers seems to arise, in part, from DHS forms and regulations. The standard detainer form (Form I-247) used between 1997 and 2010 explicitly stated that federal regulations "required"

---

<sup>70</sup> *Id.* at 1198.

<sup>71</sup> *Id.*

<sup>72</sup> *Id.* at 1199. The court also noted the incongruity of permitting the issuance of immigration detainers for controlled substance offenses, but not for "violent offenses such as murder, rape and robbery."

<sup>73</sup> *Jimenez Moreno v. Napolitano*, Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶¶ 37, 39. *See also* *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at 1.

<sup>74</sup> CONG. REC., September 11, 1986, pg. H-22981 (statement of Representative Ackerman read by Representative Smith) ("My amendment ... addresses local law enforcement complaints concerning the INS' inability to issue a judgment on a suspect's citizenship fast enough to allow the authorities to continue to detain him. ... [It] requires the INS to respond quickly to an inquiry by a local law enforcement agency and make a determination as to the status of the suspect. If the individual is determined to be an illegal alien, *the INS must take the necessary actions to detain the suspect and process the case.*") (emphasis added).

<sup>75</sup> *See, e.g.*, Am. Civil Liberties Union of Michigan, ACLU, MIRC Send Letters to All Michigan Jails Warning of Costly, Illegal Immigration Holds, August 1, 2011, *available at* <http://www.aclumich.org/issues/immigrant-rights/2011-08/1596> (suggesting that "[l]ocal jails aren't familiar with the law on immigration detainers," and therefore may think they are required to hold aliens).

recipients to hold aliens for up to 48 hours (excluding weekends and federal holidays) so that ICE could assume custody.<sup>76</sup> This form was amended in August 2010 to indicate that ICE “requested”—rather than “required”—that aliens be held.<sup>77</sup> However, federal regulations continued to include language which some construe to mean that compliance with ICE detainers is mandatory,<sup>78</sup> and in December 2011, ICE further amended Form I-247 in a way that, some suggested, created confusion as to whether compliance with detainers is requested or required.<sup>79</sup> Specifically, as amended in December 2011, Form I-247 stated that

This *request* flows from federal regulation 8 C.F.R. §287.7, which provides that a law enforcement agency “*shall* maintain custody of an alien” once a detainer has been issued by DHS.<sup>80</sup>

The potentially ambiguous language was, however, only used until December 2012, when ICE amended the detainer form again to indicate that “detainer request[s] derive[] from federal regulation,” without quoting the text of that regulation.<sup>81</sup> Some jurisdictions may also have taken DHS’s statements that they are required to participate in the Secure Communities program to mean that they must honor detainers issued in conjunction with that program.<sup>82</sup>

Notwithstanding the language of the detainer form and regulations, the federal government recently appears to have taken the position that detainers are “requests,” not “orders.”<sup>83</sup> This is arguably in keeping with the traditional view that compliance with detainers is a matter of comity between jurisdictions.<sup>84</sup> In addition, an argument could potentially be made that any attempt to

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action, Form I-247 (Rev. 4-1-97) (copy on file with the author) (“Federal regulations (8 C.F.R. 287.7) *require* that you detain the alien for a period not to exceed 48 hours (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and Federal holidays) to provide adequate time for INS to assume custody of the alien.”) (emphasis added).

<sup>77</sup> See U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Security, Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action, Form I-247 (08/10) (copy on file with the author) (“Under Federal regulation 8 C.F.R. §287.7. DHS *requests* that you maintain custody of this individual.”).

<sup>78</sup> 8 C.F.R. §287.7(d) (“Upon a determination by the Department to issue a detainer for an alien not otherwise detained by a criminal justice agency, such agency *shall* maintain custody of the alien for a period not to exceed 48 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays in order to permit assumption of custody by the Department.”) (emphasis added). This subsection of the regulation is, however, captioned “Temporary detention at Department *request*.” *Id.* (emphasis added).

<sup>79</sup> See, e.g., Jimenez Moreno v. Napolitano, Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 24.

<sup>80</sup> U.S. Dep’t of Homeland Security, Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action, DHS Form I-247 (12/11) (copy on file with the author) (emphasis added).

<sup>81</sup> Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action, *supra* note 2.

<sup>82</sup> See, e.g., Mickey McCarter, *ICE to States: Participation in Secure Communities Mandatory*, HOMELAND SECURITY TODAY, August 8, 2011, available at <http://www.hstoday.us/briefings/today-s-news-analysis/single-article/ice-to-states-participation-in-secure-communities-mandatory/3cbcc9927ec1a8893859890f6bc14dff.html>.

<sup>83</sup> Uroza v. Salt Lake County, First Amended Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 29.

<sup>84</sup> See, e.g., Moody v. Daggett, 429 U.S. 78, 81 n.2 (1976) (“When two autonomous jurisdictions are involved, as for example when a federal detainer is placed against an inmate of a state institution, a detainer is a matter of comity.”); *Vargas*, 854 F.2d at 1031 n.1. In particular, prior to the implementation of Secure Communities, one study found “widespread willingness to accept detainers from ICE,” with 94 of the 99 jurisdictions responding to the survey indicating that they accepted immigration detainers, and 78 indicating that they would notify ICE before releasing an alien from custody. U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, Audit Div., Cooperation of SCAAP Recipients in the Removal of Criminal Aliens from the United States, January 27, at 13-15, available at <http://www.justice.gov/oig/reports/OJP/a0707/final.pdf>. The State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) compensates states and localities for the costs of detaining certain criminal aliens.



“require” state and local compliance would violate the Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The Tenth Amendment provides that “[t]he powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people,”<sup>85</sup> and has been construed to bar the federal government from “command[ing] the States’ officers ... to administer or enforce a federal regulatory program.”<sup>86</sup> The case that gave rise to this holding, *Printz v. United States*, struck down interim provisions of the Brady Handgun Violence Protection Act requiring state and local officers to conduct background checks on prospective handgun purchasers. Requiring state and local officers to maintain custody of an alien, who would otherwise have been released for any criminal offense, at the request of federal officials would appear to be comparable to requiring state and local officers to conduct background checks on handgun purchasers, and could raise similar constitutional issues.<sup>87</sup> The fact that DHS officials, not state and local officials, determine who should be kept in custody is unlikely to change this analysis, given that the Supreme Court in *Printz* noted that “[i]t matters not whether policymaking is involved, and no case-by-case weighing of the burdens or benefits is necessary; such commands are fundamentally incompatible with our constitutional system of dual sovereignty.”<sup>88</sup>

Several federal district courts have, however, recently suggested that states and localities are “required” to comply with immigration detainers,<sup>89</sup> although this statement arose in the context of

<sup>85</sup> U.S. CONST., amend. X.

<sup>86</sup> *Printz v. United States*, 521 U.S. 898, 935 (1997).

<sup>87</sup> See, e.g., *Jimenez Moreno v. Napolitano*, Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶¶ 52-55; *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 52. “Requiring” states and localities to honor immigration detainers may be distinguished from “requiring” states and localities to participate in Secure Communities. The information sharing between the FBI and DHS that underlies Secure Communities is a matter of federal law, and jurisdictions that object to being “required” to participate in Secure Communities probably could not successfully challenge this information sharing on Tenth Amendment grounds. See, e.g., *Participation in Secure Communities Mandatory*, *supra* note 82 (reporting that ICE has determined that a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between ICE and a state is “not required to activate or operate Secure Communities for any jurisdiction,” and that all MOAs between ICE and states have been terminated). However, jurisdictions could potentially avoid some effects of the sharing of information between the FBI and DHS by not submitting fingerprint data to the FBI, or declining to honor some or all immigration detainers. See, e.g., Michele Waslin, Counties Say No to ICE’s Secure Communities Program, But Is Opting Out Possible? *available at* <http://immigrationimpact.com/2010/10/01/counties-say-no-to-ices-secure-communities-program-but-is-opting-out-possible/> (reporting that some jurisdictions have considered not submitting fingerprints to the FBI in certain cases); Policy for Responding to ICE Detainers, *supra* note 12 (policy of generally declining to honor ICE detainers).

<sup>88</sup> *Printz*, 521 U.S. at 935. *But see* *Reno v. Condon*, 528 U.S. 141, 151 (2000) (finding no violation of the Tenth Amendment where Congress regulates state activities directly, as opposed to requiring “States in their sovereign capacities to regulate their own citizens”). Conditioning federal funding upon compliance with immigration detainers is theoretically possible, and would probably not be seen as raising Tenth Amendment issues. See, e.g., *South Dakota v. Dole*, 483 U.S. 203 (1987) (upholding a federal law which conditioned receipt of federal highway funds upon a state’s agreeing to raise the minimum drinking age to 21). However, the federal government has historically paid states and localities for holding aliens, rather than given them grant funding for doing so. See, e.g., Office of the Inspector Gen., Audit Div., Dep’t of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service Institutional Removal Program, Audit Report 02-41, September 2002, at 17-19, *available at* <http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/reports/INS/a0241/final.pdf> (recommending that funding be conditioned on state cooperation in enforcing immigration law, but noting that “SCAAP funds represent a reimbursement of costs borne by state and local governments to incarcerate illegal aliens ... and therefore grant conditions would be inappropriate”).

<sup>89</sup> *Galarza v. Szalczyk*, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 47023, at \*55 (E.D. Pa., March 30, 2012) (“Thus, although an immigration detainer ‘serves to advise another law enforcement agency that the Department seeks custody’ and ‘is a request’ to the federal, state, or local law enforcement agency presently holding the individual named in the detainer that it ‘advise the Department, prior to release’ of that individual ... once the immigration detainer is issued, the local, state, or federal agency then holding the individual ‘shall’ maintain custody. ... Moreover, although the period of time that the agency with custody when the immigration detainer is issued is required to hold the individual is 48 hours, (continued...)”).

a challenge to the actions of certain county personnel in responding to an ICE detainer, and the county appears to have asserted that the county's policy as to immigration detainers was solely to comply with the purported dictates of federal law.<sup>90</sup> In contrast, in other cases, the plaintiffs have asserted that a state or locality is liable for holding them pursuant to an immigration detainer, in part, on the grounds that the state had no obligation to honor immigration detainers and acted unreasonably in doing so.<sup>91</sup> It is unclear whether and how these two lines of argument might be reconciled, or whether local policies of declining to honor at least some ICE detainers might be found to be preempted if federal regulations were construed to require compliance with immigration detainers. Cook County, Illinois, for example, has adopted a policy of generally "declin[ing] ICE detainer requests," at least until it has a written agreement with the federal government ensuring that it will be reimbursed for "all costs" it incurs in complying with ICE detainers.<sup>92</sup> Several other jurisdictions have similar policies.<sup>93</sup>

## Who Has Custody of Aliens Subject to Detainers?

The term "custody" is generally understood to "encompass[] most restrictions on liberty" resulting from a criminal or other charge or conviction, including arrest or supervised release.<sup>94</sup> Custody is not determined solely by where a person is detained, and the entity by whom the person is physically detained is not necessarily the entity that would be found to have "technical"

---

(...continued)

those 48 hours excludes Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays.") (internal citations omitted); *Moreno v. Napolitano*, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 170751, at \*14 (N.D. Ill., Nov. 30, 2012) (describing the language in DHS regulations stating that state and local law officers "shall maintain" custody of an alien at ICE's request as "mandatory language").

<sup>90</sup> *Galarza*, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 47023, at \*55-\*56. Elsewhere, the court found that an individual officer had qualified immunity for certain claims against him because, even if the period of detention specified by DHS's regulations were unconstitutional, "it would not be clear to every reasonable officer that ... detention for a period expressly provided by federal regulations was unlawful." *Id.* at \*52.

<sup>91</sup> See, e.g., *Morales v. Chadbourne*, Complaint, *supra* note 1, at ¶ 74 ("The applicable federal regulation makes clear, however, that the immigration detainer is merely a 'request,' not a legally enforceable command.").

<sup>92</sup> Policy for Responding to ICE Detainers, *supra* note 12. Specifically, the policy provides that the Sheriff of Cook County shall decline ICE detainer requests "unless there is a written agreement with the federal government by which all costs incurred by Cook County in complying with the ICE detainers shall be reimbursed," and that "[u]nless ICE agents have a criminal warrant, or County officials have a legitimate law enforcement purpose that is not related to the enforcement of immigration laws, ICE agents shall not be given access to individuals or allowed to use County facilities for investigative interviews or other purposes, and County personnel shall not expend their time responding to ICE inquiries or communicating with ICE regarding individuals' incarceration status or release dates while on duty." The last proviso (i.e., that county personnel may not spend their time on duty communicating with ICE regarding incarceration status or release dates) appears to have been drafted in an attempt to avoid conflicts with Section 642 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, which expressly prohibits states and localities from enacting measures that would limit the ability of state and local governments or officials to share information regarding "citizenship or immigration status" with federal authorities. See 8 U.S.C. §1373(a)-(b). However, ICE's Director has reportedly suggested that this and related measures could be impermissible insofar as they prohibit local officials from responding to ICE inquiries or sending immigration data to ICE. See, e.g., *Yale Lawsuit Claims ICE Detainers Are Unconstitutional*, IMMIGRATION REFORM BLOG, February 27, 2012, available at <http://www.fairus.org/legislative-updates/fair-legislative-update-february-27-2012> (also quoting the Director of ICE as calling such policies a "serious impediment" to immigration enforcement that "undermine[] public safety").

<sup>93</sup> See, e.g., *Santa Clara County to Stop Honoring Immigration Detainers for Low-Level Offenders*, *supra* note 12 (honoring only ICE detainers placed on those accused of "serious and violent felonies"); *San Francisco County Jail Won't Hold Inmates for ICE*, *supra* note 12 (not honoring detainers for persons arrested for "petty offenses").

<sup>94</sup> *Pack v. Yusuff*, 218 F.3d 448, 454 n.5 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2000).

or legal custody of the person.<sup>95</sup> Who has custody of a detained alien can be significant for purposes of any habeas corpus challenge to the legality of the detention,<sup>96</sup> and potentially also for determining whether any “hold” that may have occurred as a result of the issuance of an immigration detainer was authorized. The writ of habeas corpus has historically “served as a means of reviewing the legality of Executive detention,”<sup>97</sup> and detained aliens could potentially challenge the fact, duration, or execution of their detention by federal, state, or local law enforcement.<sup>98</sup> Successfully maintaining a habeas action depends, in part, upon determining who has custody. Federal courts will generally find that they lack jurisdiction if the alien against whom the detainer is lodged is in state custody,<sup>99</sup> while state courts will find that they lack jurisdiction if the alien subject to the detainer is in federal custody.<sup>100</sup> Who has custody could also be relevant in determining whether any “hold” of the alien that results from the issuance of a detainer is authorized. For example, assuming that holds are made pursuant to ICE’s general authority to make warrantless arrests—rather than the detainer statute, regulations, or form<sup>101</sup>—questions could arise as to whether state and local officers who are not acting pursuant to a 287(g)

<sup>95</sup> See, e.g., *Chung Young Chew v. Boyd*, 309 F.2d 857, 865 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1962) (finding that, once INS has issued a warrant for the alien, the lodging of a detainer with the state currently holding the alien results in the Service gaining “immediate technical custody”); *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 14 (distinguishing between physical and legal custody).

<sup>96</sup> Aliens have sometimes also attempted to bring suit in mandamus, seeking to compel the federal government to assume custody over them after a detainer has been issued. However, such actions typically fail. See, e.g., *Campos v. INS*, 62 F.3d 311, 314 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1995) (affirming the district court’s denial of an alien’s mandamus action seeking an expedited deportation hearing); *Perez v. INS*, 979 F.2d 299, 301 (3d Cir. 1992) (an alien who has been ordered deported, but is still serving a federal sentence, cannot “by mandamus or any other medium compel INS to deport her prior to the completion of her custodial sentence”).

<sup>97</sup> *Rasul*, 542 U.S. at 474. See also *Harris v. Nelson*, 394 U.S. 286, 292 (1969) (“There is no higher duty of a court, under our constitutional system, than the careful processing and adjudication of petitions for writs of habeas corpus, for it is in such proceedings that a person in custody charges error, neglect, or evil purpose has resulted in his unlawful confinement and that he is deprived of his freedom contrary to law.”).

<sup>98</sup> See, e.g., *Preiser v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 475, 484 (1973) (characterizing challenges to the basic fact or duration of imprisonment as the “essence of habeas”). Challenges to the conditions of confinement, in contrast, generally cannot be maintained in habeas, although they could potentially be brought on other grounds. See, e.g., *Cohen v. Lappin*, 402 Fed. App’x 674, 675 (3d Cir. 2010) (affirming the district court’s dismissal of the petitioner’s claim that an ICE detainer was “adversely impacting his custody level and security designation” on the grounds that claims that do not challenge the basic fact or duration of imprisonment are not actionable in habeas). The court noted, however, that certain claims could potentially be filed pursuant to *Bivens v. Six Unknown Federal Narcotics Agents*, 403 U.S. 388 (1971), in cases where a federal law enforcement agency has custody. Alternatively, where the state has custody, certain claims could be brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §1983. *But see infra* note 126 and accompanying text (noting that certain claims may not be maintained on due process grounds because persons do not have protected liberty or other interests in the conditions of their confinement).

<sup>99</sup> See, e.g., *Orozco v. U.S. INS*, 911 F.2d 539 (11<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1990) (finding that the alien against whom the detainer was lodged was in state custody, rather than INS custody). For more on this case, see *infra* notes 109-110 and accompanying text.

<sup>100</sup> See, e.g., *Baez v. Hamilton County, Ohio*, No. 1:07cv821, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 2982 (S.D. Ohio, January 15, 2008) (case moot because alien had been taken into ICE custody). A habeas action could potentially also be found to be moot because the alien has been released. See, e.g., *Lemus v. Holder*, 404 Fed. App’x 848 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2010); *Lopez-Santos v. Arkansas*, No. 5:08-vb-05030-JLH (W.D. Ark. 2008) (cited in *Enforcing the Limits of the Executive’s Authority to Issue Immigration Detainers*, *supra* note 17, at 180-181 n.98). However, at least one federal district court has adopted the petitioners’ view that such claims are not moot, at least not when raised in a class action, because the claims are “capable of repetition yet evading review.” See *Moreno*, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 170751, at \*20 (“Each year ICE issues hundreds of thousands of I-247 detainers. ... This makes it likely that a constant class of persons will be subject to an I-247 detainer similar to *Moreno* and *Lopez*.”).

<sup>101</sup> See *infra* notes 133-140 and accompanying text.

agreement have authority to detain an alien found to be in state custody.<sup>102</sup> Such questions could, however, potentially be avoided if the alien were found to be in DHS custody.<sup>103</sup>

Whether DHS, or a state or local government, is seen as having custody of an alien for whom a detainer has been issued appears to depend upon how detainers are characterized, as well as the facts and circumstances of the case. Courts in numerous jurisdictions have held that the filing of a detainer, in itself, does not result in an alien being in federal custody.<sup>104</sup> However, these courts have generally viewed detainers as administrative devices, designed to give states and localities notice of ICE's intentions,<sup>105</sup> and their decisions probably cannot be read to mean that an alien for whom a detainer has been issued is never in federal custody.<sup>106</sup> For example, in *Mohammed v. Sullivan*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit affirmed the district court's dismissal without prejudice of the petitioner's habeas petition because "the filing of an INS detainer with prison officials does not constitute the requisite 'technical custody' for purposes of habeas jurisdiction."<sup>107</sup> The petitioner here was serving a sentence for several drug-related offenses when INS filed a detainer that resulted in a more restrictive security and custody classification being applied. However, the court found that he was not in INS custody for purposes of his challenge to this re-classification.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, in *Orozco v. U.S. INS*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit found that the "filing of a detainer, standing alone, did not cause [the petitioner] to come within the custody of the INS" for purposes of a habeas proceeding.<sup>109</sup> The detainer in this case indicated that INS had initiated an investigation to determine whether the petitioner was removable, and the court found that "merely lodging" a detainer with such a notice did not result in INS custody.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>102</sup> See, e.g., *Arroyo v. Judd*, No.:8:10-cv-911-T-23TBM, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 77087, at \*5 (M.D. Fla., July 30, 2010) ("[T]he regulation providing for a forty-eight-hour detainer, 8 C.F.R. §287.7, delegates no authority to the defendants. This regulation is a federal regulation governing a federal agency.").

<sup>103</sup> State and local officials could potentially be found to have acted as agents of the federal government in holding an alien. See, e.g., *Braden v. 30<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit Court*, 410 U.S. 484, 489 (1973) ("[Because] the Alabama warden acts ... as the agent of the Commonwealth of Kentucky in holding the petitioner pursuant to the Kentucky detainer, we have no difficulty concluding that petitioner is 'in custody.'" (emphasis in original)).

<sup>104</sup> See, e.g., *Orozco*, 911 F.2d at 541; *Zolicoffer v. United States Dep't of Justice*, 315 F.3d 538 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2003); *Campos v. INS*, 62 F.3d 311, 314 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1995); *Prieto v. Gluch*, 913 F.2d 1159, 1162-64 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1990); *Mohammed v. Sullivan*, 866 F.2d 258, 260 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1989); *Campillo v. Sullivan*, 853 F.2d 593 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1988); *Cohen v. Lappin*, 402 Fed. App'x 674 (3d Cir. 2010).

<sup>105</sup> See, e.g., *Giddings v. Chandler*, 979 F.2d 1104, 1105 n.3 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1992) ("Filing a detainer is an informal procedure in which the INS informs prison officials that a person is subject to deportation and requests that officials give the INS notice of the person's death, impending release, or transfer to another institution."); *Fernandez-Collado v. INS*, 644 F. Supp. 741, 743 n.1 (D. Conn. 1986) ("The detainer expresses only the intention of the Service to make a determination of deportability if and when the subject of the notice becomes available at a later time."); *In re Sanchez*, 20 I. & N. Dec. 223, 225 (BIA 1990) (characterizing an immigration detainer as "merely an administrative mechanism to assure that a person subject to confinement will not be released from custody until the party requesting the detainer has an opportunity to act"). The *Fernandez-Collado* court, in particular, took the position that, "[s]ince a sentenced inmate cannot be deported while imprisoned, the I.N.S. has absolutely no occasion to consider release or custody of the petitioner until after his release from his current confinement." 644 F. Supp. at 744.

<sup>106</sup> But see *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 8 ("[An immigration detainer] does not establish federal custody by DHS or any other agency over the subject of the detainer.").

<sup>107</sup> *Mohammed*, 866 F.2d at 260.

<sup>108</sup> *Id.* The court here did not address the question of whether conditions of custody can be challenged in habeas. See *supra* note 98 and accompanying text.

<sup>109</sup> 911 F.2d at 541. The court did, however, recognize the possibility that the filing of a detainer could result in INS custody for purposes of a habeas action in certain circumstances. *Id.* at 541.

<sup>110</sup> *Id.*

In certain cases, however, the court has found that an alien is, or at least could potentially be, in federal custody because of the filing of an immigration detainer. For example, in *Galaviz-Medina v. Wooten*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit found that an alien subject to a deportation order and serving a sentence with the federal Bureau of Prisons was in INS custody as the result of an immigration detainer lodged against him.<sup>111</sup> According to the court, while the lodging of the detainer, in itself, did not result in INS custody, the deportation order “establishe[d] conclusively the INS’s right to custody following the expiration of his current term.”<sup>112</sup> Thus, because the “INS ha[d] a more concrete interest in this alien,”<sup>113</sup> the court found that he was in INS custody. Similarly, in *Vargas v. Swan*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, rejected the INS’s attempt to characterize a detainer as “an internal administrative mechanism” which would not support a finding that the alien was in INS custody.<sup>114</sup> Instead, the court remanded the case for a determination as to whether the jurisdiction receiving the detainer would treat it as a simple notice of INS’s interest in a prisoner, or as a request to hold the inmate after his criminal sentence is completed so that INS could take him into custody.<sup>115</sup>

Most of these cases were decided prior to the implementation of the Secure Communities program, and it is possible that a court might adopt a more “bright line” approach to whether the issuance of a detainer results in ICE custody as a result of this nationwide program. At least one of the suits presently challenging state, local, or federal detainer practices involves a petition for a writ of habeas corpus,<sup>116</sup> and thereby raises anew the question of who has custody of aliens subject to detainers.

## Do Detainer Practices Violate Aliens’ Constitutional Rights?

Aliens within the United States, including aliens who are present without authorization, enjoy certain protections under the U.S. Constitution, including those of the Fourth and Fifth Amendments.<sup>117</sup> Specifically, the Fourth Amendment guarantees “[t]he right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures,”<sup>118</sup> while the Fifth Amendment provides that “[n]o person shall be ... deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”<sup>119</sup> For purposes of the Fourth Amendment, a

---

<sup>111</sup> 27 F.3d 487, 493 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1994). See also *Chung Young Chew*, 309 F.2d at 856.

<sup>112</sup> 27 F.3d at 493.

<sup>113</sup> *Id.*, at 494.

<sup>114</sup> 854 F.2d 1028, 1030 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir.).

<sup>115</sup> *Id.* at 1032-33. See also *id.* at 1032 (“[F]or Vargas to be deemed in custody pursuant to the INS detainer, the effect of the detainer here must be that Wisconsin places a hold on Vargas.”) (emphasis added). See also *Orito v. Powers*, 479 F.2d 435, 437 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1973) (finding that a state detainer filed with a federal correctional institution resulted in state custody because it requested that the inmate be “held” for state officials).

<sup>116</sup> See *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13.

<sup>117</sup> See, e.g., *Silesian Am. Corp. v. Clark*, 332 U.S. 469 (1947) (Fifth Amendment); *Bilokumsky v. Tod*, 263 U.S. 149 (1923) (Fourth Amendment). While the Fourth and Fifth Amendments protect persons only in their dealings with the federal government, the Fourteenth Amendment provides for similar protections in dealings with state or local governments. See generally U.S. CONST., amend. XIV, §1 (“[N]or shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law”); *Mapp v. Ohio*, 367 U.S. 643 (1961) (Fourth Amendment limits state and local conduct); *Wolf v. Colorado*, 338 U.S. 25 (same). Aliens who have not yet entered the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, in contrast, are generally not entitled to such protections. See, e.g., *Johnson v. Eisentrager*, 339 U.S. 763 (1950).

<sup>118</sup> U.S. CONST., amend. IV.

<sup>119</sup> U.S. CONST., amend. V & amend. XIV, §1.

“seizure” occurs when a person’s “freedom to walk away” has been restrained.<sup>120</sup> Similarly, “[f]reedom from imprisonment—from government custody, detention, or other forms of physical restraint—lies at the heart of the liberty” that is protected by the Due Process clause of the Fifth Amendment.<sup>121</sup>

In considering whether the detainer practices of federal, state, and/or local governments infringe aliens’ constitutional rights, courts would probably look at the specific actions taken pursuant to individual detainers, as well as ICE’s reasons for issuing the individual detainers, rather than considering detainers in the abstract. Arguments can be made that the mere lodging of a detainer can negatively affect aliens’ criminal cases and/or sentences, regardless of the actions that ICE requests of state or local officials.<sup>122</sup> For example, an alien subject to a detainer could be denied bond,<sup>123</sup> or given a more restrictive custody or security designation,<sup>124</sup> because of the detainer. Nonetheless, despite such effects, certain actions pursuant to a detainer would not appear to entail a seizure of the alien’s person,<sup>125</sup> or a protected liberty interest (e.g., notifying ICE prior to releasing an alien, or in the event of the alien’s transfer or death).<sup>126</sup> Holding a person who otherwise would have been released, in contrast, could potentially be said to result in a seizure of that person, and implicate protected liberty interests. Such a hold is arguably the equivalent of a new arrest<sup>127</sup> and, thus, would require independent authority. The authority underlying the initial arrest would not, in itself, permit the hold.

However, while holds pursuant to detainers would appear to involve seizures of the alien’s person and protected liberty interests, they could potentially still be found to be constitutional, depending upon the grounds for the hold. ICE can use Form I-247 to request holds on various grounds,

<sup>120</sup> *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1, 16 (1968) (“[W]henver a police officer accosts an individual and restrains his freedom to walk away, he has ‘seized’ that person.”). *See also* *Vohra v. United States*, No. SA CV 04-00972 DSF, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 34363, at \*25 (C.D. Cal. February 4, 2010) (“Plaintiff was kept in formal detention for at least several hours longer due to an ICE detainer. In plain terms, he was subjected to the functional equivalent of a warrantless arrest.”).

<sup>121</sup> *Zadvydas v. Davis*, 533 U.S. 678, 690 (2001).

<sup>122</sup> *See, e.g.*, Am. Civil Liberties Union et al., Letter to Assistant Secretary John T. Morton, June 23, 2010, available at [http://www.aclu.org/files/assets/Detainers\\_revised.pdf](http://www.aclu.org/files/assets/Detainers_revised.pdf) (“Detainers affect and interfere with every aspect of an individual’s state criminal case, from bail to eligibility for treatment, social services, and detention alternatives.”).

<sup>123</sup> In some jurisdictions, aliens against whom detainers have been lodged are categorically ineligible for bond in criminal proceedings. *See, e.g.*, *United States v. Rice*, No. 3:04CR-83-R, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 40737 (W.D. Ky., June 19, 2006); *United States v. Magallon-Toro*, No. 3:02-MJ-332, 3:02-CR-385-M, 2002 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 23362 (N.D. Tex., December 4, 2002). Other jurisdictions reject this categorical approach. *See, e.g.*, *United States v. Barrera-Omana*, 638 F. Supp. 2d 1108, 1111-12 (D. Minn. 2009). However, even in jurisdictions where the categorical approach is rejected, the presence of an immigration detainer may still be one of the factors used in bail determinations. *See, e.g.*, *United States v. Salas-Urenas*, No. 11-3182, 2011 U.S. App. LEXIS 14941 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir., July 19, 2011) (affirming district court decision ordering an alien’s pre-trial detention that was based, in part, on the existence of an ICE detainer); *United States v. Loera Vasquez*, 413 Fed. App’x 42, 43 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2011) (same).

<sup>124</sup> *See, e.g.*, *Mohammed*, 866 F.2d at 260.

<sup>125</sup> For example, requesting that state or local law enforcement notify ICE at least 30 days prior to the release of a person who is being held on other grounds would generally not be found to entail a “seizure” of the person, even if the filing of the detainer results in the person’s security classification being changed by the state or locality.

<sup>126</sup> *See, e.g.*, *Nasious v. Two Unknown B.I.C.E. Agents at the Arapahoe County Justice Center*, 366 Fed. App’x 894, 896 (10<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2010) (finding that the plaintiff did not have “a protected liberty interest in being housed in a community corrections facility”); *Borrero v. Wells*, No. CV 309-096, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 85353 (S.D. Ga., May 25, 2010) (plaintiff lacked a protected liberty interest in housing assignments, transfer to another facility, and participating in rehabilitative programs).

<sup>127</sup> *Cf. Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 46.

including (1) the initiation of an investigation to determine whether the alien is removable; (2) the initiation of removal proceedings; (3) a warrant of arrest for removal proceedings; and (4) a removal order.<sup>128</sup> Different grounds could potentially raise different issues. For example, a hold based upon a warrant of arrest for removal proceedings, or a removal order, could be found to raise different issues than a hold requested so that ICE may investigate whether an alien is removable. Arrests pursuant to warrants are presumptively reasonable, and ICE has broad authority to detain aliens for removal. In contrast, authority to hold aliens pending an investigation of their removability would appear to be more limited, as discussed below.<sup>129</sup>

## Are Aliens “Seized” in Violation of Their Constitutional Rights?

The Fourth Amendment does not prohibit all “seizures” of persons, only those that are “unreasonable.”<sup>130</sup> Seizures that are made pursuant to a warrant—including warrants of arrest for removal proceedings—are presumptively reasonable. In contrast, those “conducted outside the judicial process without prior approval by a judge or magistrate, are *per se* unreasonable...[.] subject only to a few specifically established and well-delineated exceptions.”<sup>131</sup> One such exception is where a law enforcement officer has sufficient reason to believe the person arrested has committed a felony.<sup>132</sup> Congress has granted immigration officers similar authority as to immigration offenses. Specifically, Section 287(a) of the INA provides that

[a]ny officer or employee of the Service authorized under regulations prescribed by the Attorney General shall have power *without warrant* ... to arrest any alien in the United

<sup>128</sup> See Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action, *supra* note 2.

<sup>129</sup> It should also be noted that, even if particular practices were found to violate an alien’s constitutional rights, ICE would not necessarily be barred from removing the alien because of these violations. Aliens whose constitutional rights are violated could potentially be entitled to release as a result of a habeas action, or monetary damages for the violation of their rights. In addition, if requested to do so, a court could potentially enjoin state, local and/or federal governments from holding aliens pursuant to a detainer in the future, or declare that particular detainer practices are unconstitutional. See *supra* notes 60-62 and accompanying text. However, the fact that the alien whose rights were violated was in the United States illegally would not necessarily be suppressed in any removal proceedings brought against that alien. See, e.g., *Pac-Ruiz v. Holder*, 629 F.3d 771, 777-78 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2010) (declining to suppress all statements and documentation regarding an alien’s national origin and citizenship obtained by ICE as a result of his warrantless arrest on the grounds that the exclusionary rule generally does not apply in civil deportation hearings). For example, in *Pac-Ruiz v. Holder*, the court relied on the precedent of *INS v. Lopez-Mendoza*, wherein the Supreme Court held that the “exclusionary rule”—which requires that evidence obtained in violation of certain constitutional rights be excluded from a person’s criminal trial—does not apply in immigration proceedings absent “egregious violations of the Fourth Amendment or other liberties that might transgress notions of fundamental fairness and undermine the probative value of the evidence obtained.” 468 U.S. 1032, 1046 (1984). Since *Lopez-Mendoza*, the federal courts of appeals have differed as to the appropriate standard for applying the exclusionary rule. Compare *Lopez-Rodriguez v. Mukasey*, 536 F.3d 1012, 1018-19 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2008) (holding that the exclusion of evidence in immigration court turns upon whether the agents committed the violations deliberately, or by conduct that a reasonable officer should have known would violate the Constitution) with *Kandamar v. Gonzalez*, 464 F.3d 65, 71 (1<sup>st</sup> Cir. 2006) (requiring “specific evidence of ... government misconduct by threats, coercion or physical abuse”). In addition, the government has historically declined calls for it to categorically forego removal proceedings against aliens whose constitutional rights have been violated. See, e.g., 53 *Federal Register* at 9281 (declining to adopt suggestion that INS not assume custody of or remove an alien whose civil rights may have been violated by an illegal or unconstitutional detention by law enforcement officials).

<sup>130</sup> U.S. CONST., amend. IV.

<sup>131</sup> *Horton v. California*, 496 U.S. 128, 133 n.4 (1990).

<sup>132</sup> See, e.g., *Devenpeck v. Alford*, 543 U.S. 146, 152 (2004) (“In conformity with the rule at common law, a warrantless arrest by a law officer is reasonable under the Fourth Amendment where there is probable cause to believe that a criminal offense has been or is being committed.”); *United States v. Watson*, 423 U.S. 411, 417-24 (1976); *Brinegar v. United States*, 338 U.S. 160, 175-76 (1949).

States, if he has reason to believe that the alien so arrested is in the United States in violation of any ... law or regulation [governing the admission, exclusion, expulsion, or removal of aliens] and is likely to escape before a warrant can be obtained for his arrest, but the alien arrested shall be taken without unnecessary delay for examination before an officer of the Service having authority to examine aliens as to their right to enter or remain in the United States.<sup>133</sup>

The listing of officers and employees who are authorized to make warrantless arrests pursuant to Section 287(a) is the same as that of officers and employees who are authorized to issue detainers,<sup>134</sup> and the INS, at least, appears to have taken the position that a detainer placed pursuant to 8 C.F.R. §287.7 “is an arrest” pursuant to Section 287(a) of the INA.<sup>135</sup> Other provisions of immigration law authorizing or requiring the detention of aliens have also been cited as authority for ICE’s detainer practices, including Sections 236 and 241 of the INA.<sup>136</sup> Section 236(a) authorizes the arrest and detention of any alien, on a warrant issued by DHS, pending a decision on whether the alien is to be removed,<sup>137</sup> while Section 236(c) requires the detention of aliens who are inadmissible or removable because they have committed certain criminal offenses.<sup>138</sup> Section 241(a)(2), in turn, requires the detention, during the removal period, of aliens found to be inadmissible or deportable on criminal and related grounds, or due to

<sup>133</sup> INA §287(a)(2); 8 U.S.C. §1357(a)(2).

<sup>134</sup> Compare 8 C.F.R. §287.5(c) (power and authority to arrest) with 8 C.F.R. §287.7(b) (authority to issue detainers).

<sup>135</sup> See, e.g., INS, *The Law of Arrest, Search, and Seizure for Immigration Officers* (1993), available at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/21968268/ICE-M-69-Law-of-Arrest-January-1993> (“A detainer placed under this subsection [i.e., 8 C.F.R. §287.7] is an arrest which must be supported by probable cause.”); Anne B. Chandler, *Why Is the Policeman Asking for My Visa? The Future of Federalism and Immigration Enforcement*, 15 TULSA J. COMP. & INT’L L. 209, 224 n.57 (2008) (characterizing a hold pursuant to a detainer as a warrantless arrest pursuant to 8 U.S.C. §1357(a)(2) made by a federal officer who determines there is reason to believe that the person detained is an alien who may be removable and who is likely to escape before a warrant is obtained).

<sup>136</sup> See, e.g., Interim Policy Number 10074.1, *supra* note 50, at §5.1.

<sup>137</sup> INA §236(a), 8 U.S.C. §1226(a) (“On a warrant issued by the Attorney General, an alien may be arrested and detained pending a decision on whether the alien is to be removed from the United States.”). *But see* *Pierre v. Sabol*, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 66231 (M.D. Pa., May 11, 2012) (finding that detention in excess of 20 months pursuant to Section 236(a) was unduly prolonged, entitling him to a bond hearing before an immigration judge where the government will have the burden of showing he is a flight risk or a danger to the community); Michael John Garcia & Kate M. Manuel, CRS Legal Sidebar, How “Mandatory” Is the Mandatory Detention of Certain Aliens in Removal Proceedings?, May 22, 2013, available at <http://www.crs.gov/LegalSidebar/details.aspx?ProdId=524>.

<sup>138</sup> INA §236(c)(1), 8 U.S.C. §1226(c)(1) (“The Attorney General shall take into custody any alien who (A) is inadmissible by reason of having committed any offenses covered in section 1182(a)(2) of this title, (B) is deportable by reason of having committed any offense covered in section 1227(a)(2)(A)(ii), (A)(iii), (B), (C), or (D) of this title, (C) is deportable under section 1227(a)(2)(A)(i) of this title on the basis of an offense for which the alien has been sentence[d] to a term of imprisonment of at least 1 year, or (D) is inadmissible under section 1182(a)(3)(B) of this title or deportable under section 1227(a)(4)(B) of this title, when the alien is released, without regard to whether the alien is released on parole, supervised release, or probation, and without regard to whether the alien may be arrested or imprisoned again for the same offense.”). Specifically, Section 236(c) has been found to authorize detention for a reasonable amount of time, after which authorities must make an individualized inquiry as to whether continuing detention is necessary. See, e.g., *Leslie v. Attorney General of the United States*, 678 F.3d 265 (3d Cir. 2012) (finding that it was unreasonable to detain the petitioner for four years pursuant to Section 236(c) of the INA without making such a determination); *Diop v. ICE/Homeland Security*, 656 F.3d 221, 233 (3d Cir. 2011) (determination of what constitutes a reasonable time is a “fact-dependent inquiry that will vary depending on individual circumstances”).



terrorist activities.<sup>139</sup> In addition, at least some commentators would construe Section 287(d) of the INA to authorize the detention of aliens arrested for controlled substance offenses.<sup>140</sup>

Whether holds pursuant to an ICE detainer would be found to be authorized by one of these authorities, if the alien were found to be in ICE custody, has not been definitively settled by the courts. Some commentators have asserted that the provisions of the INA addressing the issuance of detainers for controlled substance offenses and the regulations implementing them are the sole authority for holds pursuant to detainers.<sup>141</sup> If this argument were adopted by the courts, then holds pursuant to detainers of aliens who were not arrested for controlled substance offenses could be found to be impermissible. However, even if other authorities were found to be generally applicable, questions could potentially be raised as to whether the holds of particular aliens were authorized pursuant to these authorities. For example, for a warrantless arrest to be permissible pursuant to Section 287(a) of the INA, there must be (1) “reason to believe” that the alien is (a) in the United States in violation of immigration law and (b) likely to escape before a warrant can be obtained for his or her arrest; and (2) the alien must be taken “without unnecessary delay” before an immigration officer having authority to examine aliens as to their right to enter or remain in the United States.

“Reason to believe” an alien is in the United States in violation of immigration law has generally been construed to mean that there is probable cause to believe that the alien is in the country in violation of the law.<sup>142</sup> Probable cause, in turn, “exists where the facts and circumstances within [an officer’s] knowledge and of which [he] had reasonably trustworthy information [are] sufficient in themselves to warrant a man of reasonable caution in the belief that an offense has been or is being committed,”<sup>143</sup> and questions could potentially be raised about whether there was probable cause to believe that an alien was unlawfully present if a hold is placed so that ICE may investigate an alien’s removability.<sup>144</sup> Similarly, some jurisdictions have required an individualized assessment of factors such as ties to the community (e.g., family, home, job) and attempts to flee in determining whether there was reason to believe that an alien was likely to escape before a warrant could be obtained for his or her arrest,<sup>145</sup> and a court could potentially

<sup>139</sup> INA §241(a)(2), 8 U.S.C. §1231(a)(2) (“During the removal period, the Attorney General shall detain the alien. Under no circumstances during the removal period shall the Attorney General release an alien who has been found inadmissible under section 212(a)(2) or 212(a)(3)(B) or deportable under section 237(a)(2) or 237(a)(4)(B).”).

<sup>140</sup> See *supra* note 65-66 and accompanying text.

<sup>141</sup> See, e.g., *Enforcing the Limits of the Executive’s Authority to Issue Immigration Detainers*, *supra* note 17, at 191-92.

<sup>142</sup> See, e.g., *Contreras v. United States*, 672 F.2d 307, 308 (2d Cir. 1982) (plaintiffs conceding that INS has authority to make warrantless arrests when there is probable cause to believe that an alien is present without authorization, provided that certain conditions are met); *Babula v. INS*, 665 F.2d 293, 298 (3d Cir. 1981) (“We hold that under section 1357(a)(2) and section 287.3, ‘arrest’ means an arrest upon probable cause, and not simply a detention for purposes of interrogation.”); *Tejeda-Mata v. INS*, 626 F.2d 721, 724-25 (9th Cir. 1980) (“A warrantless arrest ... requires probable cause for belief of illegal alienage.”); *Murillo v. Musegades*, 809 F. Supp. 487, 500 (W.D. Tex. 1992) (“The INS is held to the standard of ‘probable cause’ when one of its Agents arrests an individual without a warrant.”).

<sup>143</sup> *Safford Unified Sch. Dist. #1 v. Redding*, 557 U.S. 364 (2009) (internal citations omitted).

<sup>144</sup> Cf. *Vohra*, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 34363, at \*28-\*29 (finding that ICE lacked probable cause to believe an alien was present without authorization, in part, because his name was not in the database listing legal aliens). Some commentators have suggested that probable cause to believe an alien is present without authorization cannot exist when ICE uses Form I-247 to indicate that it has commenced an investigation into the alien’s removability. See, e.g., *Uroza v. Salt Lake County*, First Amended Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 30. However, it is possible that a court could view presence without authorization as merely one factor considered in investigations into whether particular aliens are removable.

<sup>145</sup> See, e.g., *Araujo v. United States*, 301 F. Supp. 2d 1095, 1101 (N.D. Cal. 2004) (finding that the government could (continued...))

find a hold placed without any consideration of these factors was impermissible. Moreover, even when there is reason to believe an alien is unlawfully present and likely to escape before a warrant can be obtained, the arresting officer must generally bring the alien before another immigration officer having authority to examine aliens as to their right to enter or remain in the United States within a “reasonable time” after arrest.<sup>146</sup> ICE regulations provide for some flexibility in determining what constitutes a reasonable time by providing that a determination as to whether to bring formal removal proceedings against the alien will generally be made within 48 hours of arrest, “except in the event of an emergency or other extraordinary circumstance[,] in which case a determination will be made within an additional reasonable period of time.”<sup>147</sup> However, in the case of particularly long holds, ICE could potentially be found to have failed to bring individual aliens before an immigration officer within a reasonable time.<sup>148</sup>

Additional questions could potentially be raised if an alien held pursuant to an immigration detainer were found to be in state custody, not DHS custody. Some jurisdictions appear to have adopted the position that the detainer regulations and/or Form I-247 authorize states and localities to hold aliens who would otherwise be released, at least for the 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) provided for in these regulations and forms.<sup>149</sup> Other jurisdictions, in contrast, have suggested that there must be some basis in state law for any hold pursuant to an immigration detainer, and that the federal regulations and forms do not provide authority for state actions.<sup>150</sup>

(...continued)

not demonstrate that the alien was likely to escape before a warrant could be obtained given that he was living with his wife, had filed an application to adjust status to lawful permanent resident, and otherwise had not evidenced an intention to flee); *Pearl Meadows Mushroom Farm, Inc. v. Nelson*, 723 F. Supp. 432, 449 (N.D. Cal. 1989) (finding that there was no likelihood of flight where the aliens arrested without a warrant “were long-term employees, had roots in the community, and family with proper immigration status,” among other things). *But see* *United States v. Cantu*, 519 F.2d 494, 497 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1975) (finding that the likelihood of escape was a serious threat because the aliens were at all times highly mobile, traveling in a car along an interstate).

<sup>146</sup> 8 C.F.R. §287.3(a). Some critics of current detainer practices have noted that, when law enforcement officers enforcing criminal law make a warrantless arrest, they must bring the inmate before a neutral magistrate for a probable cause hearing within 48 hours. *See, e.g.,* *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 47. However, courts have generally found that this requirement does not apply to warrantless arrests for immigration violations, which are, instead, governed by Section 287(a) of the INA and its implementing regulations. *See, e.g.,* *Salgado v. Scannel*, 561 F.2d 1211 (5<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1977) (rejecting the petitioner’s assertion that an affidavit establishing that he was an alien who had entered the United States illegally that was executed after his warrantless arrest should be suppressed since he was arrested without a warrant and was not taken before a neutral magistrate).

<sup>147</sup> 8 C.F.R. §287.3(d). ICE regulations also require that aliens arrested without a warrant generally be advised of the reason for their arrest and the right to be represented at no expense to the government. *See* 8 C.F.R. §287.3(c).

<sup>148</sup> *See, e.g., Pac-Ruiz*, 629 F.3d at 780 (“[A] regulatory violation can result in the exclusion of evidence if the regulation in question serves a purpose of benefit to the alien and the violation prejudiced interests of the alien which were protected by the regulation.”); *Babula*, 665 F.2d at 298 (noting that, had further questions been asked prior to giving the warnings required by Section 287.3, the conduct of the INS agents could have been found to have violated the rights of the petitioners). *But see* *Avila-Gallegos v. INS*, 525 F.2d 666 (2d Cir. 1975) (reversal of deportation order properly denied, notwithstanding defects in arrest procedure under Section 287(a)(2), where hearing testimony alone was sufficient to support an order of deportation); *In re Bulos*, 15 I. & N. Dec. 645 (1976) (defect in arrest procedure under Section 287(a)(2) is cured if the resulting deportation order is adequately supported).

<sup>149</sup> *See, e.g.,* *Ochoa v. Bass*, 181 P.3d 727, 733 (Okla. Crim. App. 2008) (“Once the forty-eight (48) hour period granted to ICE, by 8 C.F.R. §287.7(d) ..., for assumption of custody had lapsed without ICE taking any action on its detainers, the state no longer had authority to continue to hold Petitioners.”).

<sup>150</sup> *See, e.g.,* *Arroyo v. Judd*, No. 8:10-cv-911-T-23TBM, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 77087 (M.D. Fla., July 30, 2010) (“[T]he regulation providing for a forty-eight-hour detainer, 8 C.F.R. §297.7, delegates no authority to the defendants. This regulation is a federal regulation governing a federal agency.”); *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 60 (noting that, because of the state’s practice of honoring immigration detainers, people are being held without any basis in state law).

Some states may have such statutes, although it is unclear whether they would necessarily authorize all holds pursuant to detainers. For example, the plaintiff in a suit challenging certain practices of Salt Lake County, Utah, in responding to ICE detainers has alleged that the county holds people who decline to answer questions about whether they are “in the United States legally,” or who indicate that they are in the country without authorization, without bail “until legal or illegal status can be verified or ICE has an opportunity to interview them and place a detainer.”<sup>151</sup> In the plaintiff’s case, this purported policy allegedly resulted in him being held in state custody for 39 days after he posted bail,<sup>152</sup> even though Form I-247 expressly states that recipients of the form are “not authorized to hold the subject beyond the[] 48 hours” provided for in the detainer regulations and form.<sup>153</sup>

Requiring authority in state law for any holds pursuant to detainers could also potentially raise questions regarding the role of states and localities in enforcing federal immigration law. The Supreme Court’s recent decision in *Arizona v. United States* found that a provision of Arizona law that authorized state officers to make a “unilateral decision ... to arrest an alien for being removable absent any request, approval, or other instruction from the Federal Government” was preempted by the federal law.<sup>154</sup> However, this decision would not appear to foreclose a state from holding an alien pursuant to an ICE detainer absent express authorization to do so in state (or federal) law, since a detainer constitutes a request from the federal government to hold—or “arrest”—an alien.

A number of recently filed lawsuits have alleged infringement of aliens’ Fourth Amendment rights by state and/or federal governments as a result of immigration detainers issued pursuant to the Secure Communities program,<sup>155</sup> and it remains to be seen how a court might view such claims. Previous cases have addressed Fourth Amendment challenges to immigration detainers, but often in the context of motions to suppress evidence allegedly obtained in violation of aliens’ Fourth Amendment rights.<sup>156</sup> The decisions in these cases could provide some guidance on what constitutes a permissible warrantless seizure under Section 287(a) of the INA. However, it is also possible that a court might approach certain issues differently when plaintiffs seek to enjoin holds pursuant to detainers or other similar relief.

<sup>151</sup> *Uroza v. Salt Lake County*, First Amended Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 34. This policy is allegedly based on a state law requiring that the sheriff shall make a “reasonable effort to determine the citizenship status of a person charged with a felony or driving under the influence ... when the person is confined to the county jail for a period of time,” and that if the sheriff cannot verify the person’s lawful status from documents in the person’s possession, the sheriff “shall attempt to verify that status within 48 hours of the person’s confinement at the jail” by contacting DHS. *See id.*, at ¶ 38. The complaint further notes that these statutory provisions are “likely unconstitutional,” but that even if they were not, Salt Lake County’s policy goes beyond what the statute purports to authorize by requiring the detention of individuals for longer than they are lawfully confined to county jail so that ICE may place a detainer, among other things. *Id.*, at ¶ 39.

<sup>152</sup> *Id.*, at ¶ 68.

<sup>153</sup> Immigration Detainer—Notice of Action, *supra* note 2 (“For purposes of this immigration detainer, you are not authorized to hold the subject beyond these 48 hours.”).

<sup>154</sup> No. 11-182, —U.S.—, 2012 U.S. LEXIS 4872, at \*37 (June 25, 2012).

<sup>155</sup> *See, e.g., Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 35 (alleging that the issuance of detainers is not guided by any “standards,” such as reasonable suspicion, probable cause, or other grounds); *Uroza v. Salt Lake County*, First Amended Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 75 (“[O]n its face, Form I-247 allows ICE agents to request that local law enforcement agents imprison people without stating probable cause for such a detention.”).

<sup>156</sup> *See, e.g., Garcia-Torres v. Holder*, 660 F.3d 333 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2011); *Pac-Ruiz v. Holder*, 629 F.3d 771 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2010); *United States v. Diaz*, 519 F.3d 56 (1<sup>st</sup> Cir. 2008).

## Do Detainers Result in Aliens Being Deprived of Liberty Interests Without Due Process of Law?

The Fifth Amendment's guarantee of procedural due process operates to ensure that the government does not arbitrarily interfere with certain key interests (i.e., life, liberty, and property).<sup>157</sup> However, procedural due process rules are not meant to protect persons from the deprivation of these interests, *per se*. Rather, they are intended to prevent the "*mistaken or unjustified* deprivation of life, liberty, or property" by ensuring that the government uses fair and just procedures when taking away such interests.<sup>158</sup> The type of procedures necessary to satisfy due process can vary depending upon the circumstances and interests involved. In *Mathews v. Eldridge*, the Supreme Court announced the prevailing standard for assessing the requirements of due process, finding that

[i]dentification of the specific dictates of due process generally requires consideration of three distinct factors: *first*, the private interest that will be affected by the official action; *second*, the risk of erroneous deprivation of such interest through the procedures used, and probable value, if any, of additional or substitute procedural safeguards; and *finally*, the Government's interest, including the function involved and the administrative and fiscal burdens that the additional or substitute procedural requirements would entail.<sup>159</sup>

Although the requirements of due process may vary depending on the particular context, the government must provide persons with the ability to contest the basis upon which they are to be deprived of a protected interest. This generally entails notice of the proposed deprivation and a hearing before an impartial tribunal.<sup>160</sup> Additional procedural protections, such as discovery of evidence or an opportunity to confront adverse witnesses, may also be required in certain circumstances to minimize the occurrence of unfair or mistaken deprivations of protected interests.<sup>161</sup>

Whether the practices of local and/or federal governments could be found to violate aliens' due process rights under the test established by *Mathews* would, thus, appear to depend upon the aliens' and the government's interests, as well as existing and potential procedural safeguards. Loss of freedom, such as would result when an alien who would otherwise have been released is held pursuant to a detainer, has historically been seen as carrying significant weight for purposes of due process,<sup>162</sup> although some courts have suggested that the liberty interests of at least certain

<sup>157</sup> At least one case challenging detainer practices has also alleged that these practices infringe upon aliens' rights to substantive due process, as well as procedural due process. See *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 55 (alleging that freedom from physical restraint is a fundamental liberty interest that cannot be infringed unless the infringement is narrowly tailored to serve a compelling government interest).

<sup>158</sup> *Carey v. Phipus*, 435 U.S. 247, 259 (1978).

<sup>159</sup> 424 U.S. 319, 335 (1976) (emphasis added).

<sup>160</sup> See, e.g., *Mullane v. Central Hanover Trust Co.*, 339 U.S. 306, 314 (1950) (describing notice of a proposed deprivation of a protected interest as "[a]n elementary and fundamental requirement of due process"); *Mathews*, 424 U.S. at 333 ("[S]ome form of hearing is required before an individual is finally deprived of a ... [protected] interest."); *In re Murchison*, 349 U.S. 133, 135 (1955) ("A fair trial in a fair tribunal is a basic requirement of due process.").

<sup>161</sup> See Congressional Research Service, *Constitution of the United States: Analysis and Interpretation*, Fourteenth Amendment: Rights Guaranteed: The Requirements of Due Process, *available at* <http://www.crs.gov/conan/default.aspx?doc=Amendment14.xml&mode=topic&s=1&t=5113>.

<sup>162</sup> *Zadvydas*, 533 U.S. at 690 ("Freedom from imprisonment—from government custody, detention, or other forms of physical restraint—lies at the heart of the liberty that [the Due Process] Clause protects.") In *Zadvydas*, the Supreme Court suggested that a statute permitting the indefinite detention of aliens (here, aliens whose removal has been (continued...))

unauthorized aliens may be entitled to less weight.<sup>163</sup> On the other hand, the government has been recognized as having some significant interests in the detention of at least certain aliens. For example, in *Demore v. Kim*, the Supreme Court recognized the government's interest in detaining deportable aliens "during the limited period necessary for their removal proceedings" so as to ensure that they do not flee and, thus, evade removal.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, in *Carlson v. Landon*, the Court recognized that detention of certain aliens furthers the government's efforts to protect the safety and welfare of the community.<sup>165</sup> Both these interests have been expressly recognized by the courts in upholding, at least in certain circumstances, the constitutionality of provisions of the INA authorizing or requiring the detention of certain aliens pending a decision on their removability or removal proceedings, as previously discussed.<sup>166</sup>

Because there are potentially significant interests involved on the part of the alien *and* the government, the procedural safeguards associated with the issuance of detainers could play a significant role in the court's analysis of pending claims that aliens held pursuant to immigration detainers have deprived of their liberty without due process of law.<sup>167</sup> The federal government has made several changes<sup>168</sup> to its detainer form and practices since 2010, in response to criticism of the Secure Communities program that could affect the analysis of Fifth Amendment challenges to its detainer practices.<sup>169</sup> In particular, Form I-247 was amended in June 2011 to include the option

(...continued)

ordered) "would raise a serious constitutional problem."

<sup>163</sup> See, e.g., *Parra v. Perryman*, 172 F.3d 954 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1999) (upholding the constitutionality of Section 236(c) of the INA because the petitioner's legal right to remain in the United States ended once he conceded that he was an aggravated felon and, thus, any liberty interest he may have previously held was minimal); *Avramenkov v. INS*, 99 F. Supp. 2d 210 (2000) ("[B]ecause the Petitioner is almost certainly going to be removed from the country, no significant liberty interest is implicated by §236(c). In addition, the risk of erroneous deprivation is slight in light of the Petitioner's aggravated felony conviction and the fact that he does not dispute this conviction. Consequently, additional procedural safeguards would be of little value to a criminal alien, such as the Petitioner here, whose removal from the country is a virtual certainty.").

<sup>164</sup> 538 U.S. 510, 523-25 (2003) (upholding the constitutionality of Section 236(c) of the INA, which requires that certain aliens be detained for the period necessary for their removal proceedings, without providing for individualized determinations as to whether the aliens presented a flight risk). In *Demore*, the Court specifically distinguished *Zadvydas* (which addressed detention of aliens subject to removal orders, as opposed to aliens currently in removal proceedings) on the grounds that the aliens challenging their detention following final orders of deportation were ones for whom removal was "no longer practically attainable," and the detention was "indefinite" and "potentially permanent." For more on how certain federal appellate courts have construed Section 236(c) subsequent to the *Demore* decision, see Michael John Garcia & Kate M. Manuel, CRS Legal Sidebar, How "Mandatory" Is the Mandatory Detention of Certain Aliens in Removal Proceedings?, May 22, 2013, available at <http://www.crs.gov/LegalSidebar/details.aspx?ProdId=524>.

<sup>165</sup> 342 U.S. 524, 538 (1952). See also *Hermanowski v. Farquharson*, 39 F. Supp. 2d 148, 157-58 (D. R.I. 1999) (collecting cases and, particularly, discussing the Court's decision in *Carlson*).

<sup>166</sup> See *supra* notes 138-140 and accompanying text.

<sup>167</sup> See, e.g., *Jimenez Moreno v. Napolitano*, Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶¶ 22-23; *Uroza v. Salt Lake County*, First Amended Complaint, *supra* note 13, at ¶ 31; *Brizuela v. Feliciano*, Petition, *supra* note 13, at ¶¶ 43-49. Whether the claim is brought against the federal, or a state or local, government could also be significant, since states and localities may have fewer procedural safeguards associated with their detainer practices than the federal government. But see *Connecticut Adopts Protocols for Dealing with ICE's Secure Communities Program*, *supra* note 62 (noting the adoption of a protocol whereby state officers will determine whether certain conditions are satisfied before holding a person pursuant to an ICE detainer (e.g., whether ICE has issued an arrest warrant for the alien, whether there is an outstanding deportation order, etc.)).

<sup>168</sup> See *supra* notes 45-48 and 77 and accompanying text.

<sup>169</sup> See, e.g., Comments on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Draft Detainer Policy, *supra* note 11, at 10-12.

to request that a copy of the detainer be provided to the alien who is the subject of the detainer.<sup>170</sup> Previously, advocates for immigrants' rights had noted that persons subject to detainers were not always aware that detainers had been lodged against them.<sup>171</sup> Even with the June 2011 amendments, however, aliens only have notice of an ICE detainer *after* it has been issued, not *prior* to its issuance. In addition, in December 2011, ICE established a toll-free hotline that detained individuals may call if they believe they may be U.S. citizens or victims of a crime.<sup>172</sup> This hotline responds to criticisms that state and local officials have impinged upon the rights of aliens subject to detainers by using the issuance of a detainer as grounds for holding an alien in excess of 48 hours.<sup>173</sup> The hotline would potentially give certain aliens the opportunity to contest the issuance of a detainer for them. However, there does not appear to be any formal procedure associated with calls to this hotline, and whatever procedure there might be occurs *after* the issuance of a detainer. Whether these procedural safeguards are adequate to protect against erroneous deprivations of persons' liberty rights remains to be seen. It is also unclear what weight, if any, a court might accord to the fact that persons whom ICE seeks to remove from the United States generally receive a Notice to Appear and have their cases heard before immigration judges prior to their removal. These procedures are generally seen as providing due process to the individuals involved, although it is unclear whether a court would view the existence of due process in future removal proceedings as sufficient to protect against deprivations of aliens' liberty interests prior to the commencement of such proceedings.<sup>174</sup>

## Conclusion

Further judicial developments pertaining to immigration detainers may be likely, as both the use of and challenges to detainers increase. In particular, future decisions could help clarify whether the issuance of detainers for offenses not involving controlled substances is beyond DHS's statutory authority. The one federal district court to address the issue found that it is not, but the argument has persisted despite this decision. Future decisions could also clarify whether DHS forms and regulations purport to require state and local compliance with immigration detainers, and whether any attempt to require compliance is prohibited by the Tenth Amendment. Such decisions could also clarify (1) when the federal government could be found to have custody of aliens against whom detainers are lodged; (2) whether and when holds pursuant to detainers are permissible warrantless arrests; and (3) what procedural protections, if any, aliens are entitled to prior to being detained for purposes of an investigation of their removability or on other grounds.

Pending such judicial decisions, or in response to them, Congress could also expand or restrict certain detainer practices of DHS and/or state or local governments. For example, Congress could grant DHS express statutory authority to issue detainers for some or all offenses, or could clarify that the 1986 amendments to the INA are intended to preclude the issuance of detainers for offenses that do not involve controlled substances. Similarly, while the Tenth Amendment could

---

<sup>170</sup> Notice of Action, DHS Form I-247 (6/11), *supra* note 45.

<sup>171</sup> *See supra* note 46 and accompanying text.

<sup>172</sup> ICE Establishes a Hotline for Detained Individuals, *supra* note 52.

<sup>173</sup> *See, e.g.,* Uroza v. Salt Lake County, First Amended Complaint, *supra* note 13, at 68.

<sup>174</sup> *But see* Souleman v. Sabol, No. 3:09-cv-1981, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 24258 (M.D. Pa., March 16, 2010) (finding that the petitioner "has received all the process that is due to him" given that he has had "several chances" to present evidence at removal hearings, had the opportunity to challenge his detention and release on bond before an immigration judge, and will have the opportunity to challenge his detention in upcoming hearings).

potentially bar the federal government from attempting to compel states and localities to honor immigration detainers, Congress could condition certain federal funding on compliance with ICE detainers.<sup>175</sup> Congress could also expand or restrict DHS's authority to make warrantless arrests, mandatory detention of particular aliens pending removal, and/or certain procedures surrounding the issuance of detainers.

## **Author Contact Information**

Kate M. Manuel  
Legislative Attorney  
kmanuel@crs.loc.gov, 7-4477

---

<sup>175</sup> See *supra* note 88.