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FEATURED

Local law officers say policing immigration not a priority

By LAUREN FRICK The Daily News

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Galveston County Sheriff Jimmy Fullen, right, answers questions and tries to ease fears during a town hall on immigration w Galveston Police Capt. Xavier Hancock, left, and Chief Doug Balli at Moody Methodist Church in Galveston on Wednesday, 5, 2025.

JENNIFER REYNOLDS/The Daily News

GALVESTON

Law enforcement officers double-downed Wednesday night on a promise to not carry out immigration enforcement actions at places such as schools and churches.

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Nearly 70 people gathered at Moody Methodist Church, 2803 53rd St., for an immigration-focused town hall meeting to hear from representatives of the police department, the county sheriff's office, Galveston Independent School District and St. Vincent's House, 2817 Postoffice St.

Misconceptions about recent arrests of undocumented immigrants in the county, the Rev. Alicia Besser said.

The Galveston County Sheriff's Office on Jan. 26 assisted federal agencies in an immigration raid meant to round up violent offenders in the country illegally. The operation led to the arrest of 75 people in the Houston area, including four in Galveston County, but also sent off a wave of rumors that federal officials were raiding restaurants and stores in the county.

Sheriff Jimmy Fullen at Wednesday's meeting said vetting citizenship status wasn't a priority for local law enforcement, saying local agencies are involved in immigration matters only when called upon by federal agencies, especially when they are targeting violent offenders.

"There was a lot of miscommunication over an event that took place last week that the Galveston County Sheriff's was kind of involved in," Fullen said. "We were contacted by our federal partners. They said they had four people targeted in Galveston County that were here illegally and had federal felony warrants on them. We went out and assisted them and apprehended those people.

"Before you know it, the rumor started spreading that we were out on these massive man hunts, and that we were going to the workplace, we were going to the schools, the churches. That is farthest from the truth."

Fullen re-emphasized a message he recently voiced to county school district superintendents, reassuring residents the sheriff's office won't be going into schools or places of worship to search for people in the country illegally, he said.

"I want to make sure the people in this audience know that neither my deputies nor me are going to be out there looking on traffic stops, looking for people that may not be here legally, trying to get them deported," Fullen said. "That is not happening. We're going after the violent criminals that are here illegally. Period."

Read more about the meeting and people who attended it in Friday's edition of The Daily News.

Lauren Frick: 409-683-5230; lauren.frick@galvnews.com

Lauren Frick