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### **N.J. bans jails from new ICE contracts as Murphy signs**

Local and private jails in New Jersey are now banned from signing contracts to hold federal immigration detainees under a bill Gov. Phil Murphy signed into law Friday. The law (A5207) bars local and private jails or detention centers from "entering into, renewing, or extending immigration detention agreements" with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, otherwise known as ICE. New Jersey becomes the fifth U.S. state to limit or ban such contracts. The measure does not affect current ICE contracts, only future ones. Bergen and Hudson counties still have contracts, and a privately owned jail in Elizabeth recently extended its contract until 2023 while this bill sat on Murphy's desk and the governor was on a 10-day family vacation to Italy. Murphy, a Democrat who is running for re-election in November, quietly signed the bill the day after he returned from his trip. He did not release a statement about why he signed it. Under the ICE contracts, detainees wait at the local facilities for court hearings as they face the possibility of deportation. The deals have netted millions of dollars for local governments, who have charged ICE as much as \$120 a day per detainee. Democratic leaders of Bergen, Essex, and Hudson counties have defended the contracts. But progressive advocates and human rights groups have long opposed the centers. Their push got louder as the number of detainees grew under a crackdown on immigration in former President Donald Trump's administration. Protests have often included hunger strikes by detainees. Amy Torres, executive director of the New Jersey Alliance for Immigrant Justice, said the new law has been "a long time coming, not just for immigrants in New Jersey but for every family separated by detention." "Our state now joins the handful of others who are spearheading the fight to end ICE detention nationwide," Torres said in a statement. After stalling for months, both houses of the Democratic-controlled state Legislature passed this bill in June along partisan lines, with a majority of Republicans opposing the move. It was propelled by a sudden announcement by Essex County to end their contract at the county jail. State Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg, D-Bergen, a main sponsor of the law, said Friday that "county jails and other entities should be used to house people accused of real crimes, not to arbitrarily hold people who are trying to live their lives and contribute like anyone else." "Many of these individuals are immigrants who have lived in New Jersey for years, enriching our communities, and strengthening local economies," Weinberg added. "This is a common sense bill and a humane one." Sarah Fajardo, policy director of the New Jersey chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, said this law is the first step toward the state "ending its complicity in the mass detention of noncitizens." "For years, community members and advocates have fought to stop placing members of our community in cages, and New Jersey took action to ensure that people are protected not just by words, but by laws," Fajardo said. The New Jersey State Bar Association attorneys lobbied Murphy to veto this bill, arguing their clients would be sent to ICE facilities out of state, without the protections afforded to them in the Garden State and away from their attorneys and family members. "The NJSBA has never supported the detention of non-citizens without any basis for doing so," Domenick Carmagnola, the association's president, said in a statement. "To the extent that these individuals are being detained and sent to facilities in states with far less protections than New Jersey, our members remain concerned about the availability of legal services, resources and advocates to protect their rights in those states."