

July 28, 2015

Mayor Ivy Taylor and Members of the City Council of San Antonio:

Let me introduce myself. My name is Alonzo “Al” Peña. I retired as Deputy Director of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement which is a part of the Department of Homeland Security in December of 2010. I was with ICE since its creation and before that I served 16 years US Customs. I began my law enforcement career with the Texas Department of Public Safety in 1982.

During my career in law enforcement I have had numerous opportunities to see how Cartels and other similar groups infiltrate their operations into the United States. One of the preferred methods is falsification of identifications. I have seen how Cartels have utilized forged passports and driver’s licenses to provide cover for their members.

Biometric fingerprinting undertaken by police departments, also known as 10 print, is in my opinion the only viable method of screening individuals to confirm their identity and determine if the individual has any prior criminal history. Private companies who perform this same fingerprint or background check, unlike a City police department, do not have access to law enforcements data bases. Consequently critical information regarding past criminal history is omitted. Additionally, use of police departments to conduct the fingerprinting can serve as a deterrent against drivers with prior convictions, or individuals with false identities from applying and thereby adding a further level of security to the process.

Use of law enforcement database fingerprint search avoids any possibility of falsifying identities and misidentification of individuals. When the fingerprint check is performed by a city police department, a police officer or certified technician is personally supervising the fingerprinting process and signs the fingerprint card attesting to having been present during the fingerprinting process. In a private setting there is no verification as to how the process is conducted or whether the fingerprints submitted for analysis are those of the individual being screened.

Use of name only background checks such as the Immigration Services “e-verify” and I-9 verification is insufficient. It leads to abuse of the system, presentation of fraudulent documents and no system of independent verification. This is exactly the type of system criminal organizations and terrorist groups look for. They can provide their members with false identities and have them sign up as drivers for companies such as UBER and Lyft who do not use law enforcement background checks.

Given the recent rise of organized criminal activity and self-styled religious terrorists in this country it is imperative for every city to have a system that verifies the identity of all public transportation drivers. These individuals travel the streets of our cities daily. It would be very easy for any cartel such as MS-13 or religious fanatic groups to hide in

plain sight posing as a driver for these companies knowing that the true identity of the driver is unknown to law enforcement officials because the identification documents used are false and the screening system was not designed to verify the authenticity of such documents.

As a career law enforcement officer at the State and National level, I recommend that any background check of any transportation company operating on city streets be subject to a fingerprint check performed by a City police department or other law enforcement agency to ensure the accuracy of the screening and provide law enforcement with an accurate data base of transportation drivers in the city.

Sincerely



Alonzo R. Peña
President & Founder