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## News Releases

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OCTOBER 20, 2010 TAMPA, FL

### Hillsborough County earns IMAGE certification from ICE

TAMPA, Fla. - Hillsborough County officially entered the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) IMAGE program as a certified partner, following a signing ceremony today during a regular Board of County Commissioners meeting. This act solidifies the county's partnership with ICE that started in 2009 to help the county develop a more secure and stable workforce and to enhance fraudulent document awareness through education and training.

The IMAGE program, or ICE Mutual Agreement between Government and Employers, is a voluntary program that helps employers comply with the law by equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed to ensure a legal, authorized workforce.

County Commissioner Ken Hagan signed the IMAGE agreement today on behalf of the county, along with Susan McCormick, special agent in charge of the ICE Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Tampa.

"We realize that the highest level of employment integrity can only be achieved through close coordination with local employers," said McCormick.

"Today, Hillsborough County joins IMAGE business participants in Florida and around the country who are committed to protect the integrity of their workforce by helping ensure that their employees are who they represent themselves to be."

To qualify for IMAGE certification, Hillsborough County conducted a self-assessment of its hiring practices to uncover vulnerabilities that could be exploited by illegal aliens; enrolled in employment eligibility verification programs, such as E-Verify and the Social Security Number Verification Service; trained its staff on IMAGE Best Practices and how to use the new screening tools; and underwent an Form I-9 audit by ICE.

"Hillsborough County has become a leader among its governmental peers to ensure our workforce has not secured their jobs by fraudulent means," said Commissioner Ken Hagan. "As the county is a major employer in the state, it is up to us to lead by example and set the bar high for other local governments and businesses to follow."

Earlier this year, ICE signed IMAGE agreements in Florida with Tampa Electric, TECO Energy, Inc. and a local bank in Tampa, Avant Healthcare Professionals, LLC in Winter Park, Cutrale Citrus Juices USA, Inc., in Auburndale, and the Naples Hilton.

Undocumented workers create vulnerabilities in today's marketplace by presenting false documents to gain employment, completing applications for fraudulent benefits, and stealing identities of legal United States workers. To combat this, ICE initiated the IMAGE program in 2006.

All IMAGE members must participate in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) E-Verify employment eligibility verification program. Through this program, employers can verify that newly hired employees are eligible to work in the United States. This Internet-based system is available throughout the nation and is free to employers. It provides an automated link to the Social Security Administration database and DHS immigration records.

Upon enrollment in and commitment to the IMAGE Best Employment Practices, program participants are deemed "IMAGE certified," a distinction DHS and ICE believe will become an industry standard. IMAGE also provides free training to all employers on the Form I-9, fraudulent document detection, and building a solid immigration compliance model.

Companies interested in more information on the IMAGE program can call the ICE office in Tampa at (813) 357-7000 or visit [www.ICE.gov/image](http://www.ICE.gov/image).

For the most up-to-date ICE information, [sign up \(http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi\\_subscribe.html?code=USDHSICE\)](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi_subscribe.html?code=USDHSICE) for ICE e-mail alerts. You may also visit us on [Twitter \(http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://twitter.com/wwicegov\)](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://twitter.com/wwicegov) and [YouTube \(http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://www.youtube.com/wwicegov\)](http://www.ice.gov/exec/leaving.asp?url=http://www.youtube.com/wwicegov).

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE is a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit [www.ICE.gov](http://www.ICE.gov). To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423.