



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

**District 8 – Capitol Building, Room 431 Jefferson City, MO 65101**

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## **ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: MISSOURI'S RESPONSE**

The issue of illegal immigration is one that is primarily the responsibility of the federal government. However, there is much that the State of Missouri can do to assist in stemming the tide. This week I'd like to talk about legislation that the Missouri Senate passed this session to do just that.

In 1789, when the U.S. Constitution was finally adopted, the individual states entered into a covenant with one another as each state surrendered a certain measure of power to the new federal government. This approach was the only workable option, because it was impossible for 13 individual states to deal with issues such as national defense and the managing of the national economy.

More than 200 years later we are once again reminded of the need for a national policy on issues that individual states cannot adequately manage on their own. In this case, the issue is that of illegal immigration. Clearly our national policy on this matter is broken and needs immediate attention. Congress is now at work to craft legislation to address this issue, and I hope that we will soon see legislation that will secure our borders once and for all.

However, though immigration is primarily a national issue, there is much that can be done by the individual states as we attempt to work hand-in-hand with the federal government.

During the recently completed session of the Missouri General Assembly, the Senate Judiciary Committee, which I chair, considered and passed on to the full Senate two bills updating Missouri's laws on immigration.

One of these bills, SB 1250, contained the following provisions:

- Give the Missouri State Highway Patrol added authority to investigate, apprehend or detain non-citizens or nonpermanent residents of the United States.
- Provide the Highway Patrol with special training from the Department of Homeland Security on enforcing national immigration laws.

- Give authority to the Highway Patrol to transfer illegal aliens across state lines to deliver them into the custody of the Department of Homeland Security.
- Direct jailers to review the cases of those charged with felonies to see if they are in the United States legally. The jailer would ask for documentation, and if it were not provided, the matter would be referred to the Department of Homeland Security.

Though SB 1250 was passed by the Missouri Senate, it ran out of time and ultimately did not become law. However, I think this bill had many worthwhile provisions and should serve as a starting point for discussions when the Legislature reconvenes.

In a post-September 11th world, we can no longer assume that we are safe within the borders of our nation. Immigration laws must be enforced and the State of Missouri must do what it can to contribute to the national effort, even as we wait for Congress to pass a coherent national immigration policy.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at [matt\\_bartle@senate.mo.gov](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov) or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

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