



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

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

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## **REVISING A SYSTEM THAT PROMOTES ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION**

For the past couple of weeks I've talked about the issue of illegal immigration and about efforts in the State of Missouri to prevent it. I believe there are two basic steps to crafting an effective policy on immigration. First, our elected officials in Washington must act to protect the border. Period. Without this simple step, those who do not want to meet the requirements of the legal process will simply continue to walk across the border. This cannot be allowed, especially in an age of terrorism.

The President has directed that the individual states contribute to this effort by sending National Guard units on short-term assignments to shore up our borders and provide support to the beleaguered Border Patrol. Governor Blunt responded with a public announcement that soldiers from Missouri would participate — a decision I support.

In addition to sealing the border, we must change a government system that offers incentives to illegal immigrants and rewards illegal behavior. During the recently completed legislative session, the Senate passed a sweeping reform bill that attempted to do just that.

This legislation proposes that all state agencies operating public-assistance programs work with local governments and with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to develop a system to verify that a person is in the country legally.

Second, this bill requires state and local benefit programs to be restricted to citizens and legal residents. This would include Medicaid and other forms of government aid. Certain programs required by federal law would be exempt, ensuring that people needing emergency medical attention wouldn't be left behind.

The bill also bars illegal immigrants from attending public colleges and universities and puts the responsibility on the schools to verify that only those legally in the United States are enrolled in taxpayer-subsidized educational programs.

Unfortunately, the constitutional deadline of May 12 arrived before the bill could be finally passed by the Missouri House of Representatives, and the legislation will have to be reintroduced when lawmakers reconvene next year.

Some will object that the above policies are too harsh, but I believe they promote fairness. Consider that federal law currently sets a quota system dictating how many people can legally immigrate to the United States. In many cases, the waiting list is years or possibly decades. Allowing millions of people to simply bypass this system and slip across the border is fundamentally unfair, especially to law-abiding potential immigrants who wait years for the opportunity to immigrate. Furthermore, it poses a grave national security risk.

Ultimately, if we can shut off the flow of illegal immigrants by securing our borders and removing incentives to immigrate illegally, the federal government will have a powerful incentive to open the door to more legal immigration. This will allow more of those who play by the rules to have a chance to begin a better life and to live among us as fellow citizens instead of illegal residents.

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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