



Cracking Down on Illegal Immigration

JEFFERSON CITY — Recently, the flow of illegal immigration took a turn toward a tragic, deadly consequence as an illegal immigrant, who was previously arrested for child rape and was out on bail, was charged in the brutal murders of three college students in Newark, New Jersey. For those who try to brush off illegal immigration as just people trying to obtain the American dream, this incident underscores how much more complex the issue is... and the danger to our society it poses if it goes on unchecked. Here in Missouri, the governor and I are pushing a new initiative to be proactive and not wait until Washington comes up with a plan to solve this growing crisis.

The proposal calls for law enforcement units in the Missouri Department of Public Safety (the Water Patrol, Highway Patrol, and Capitol Police) to prepare for special training and **deputization** that allows state law enforcement officials to **enforce** federal immigration law as authorized through sections of the Immigration and Nationality Act. In addition, DPS will encourage and assist local law enforcement to apply for the same status and to offer state assistance, resources and support, including making available Live Scan for local law enforcement agencies that will use it. The state has invested more than \$2 million of homeland security money in Live Scan, which allows fingerprints to be scanned in the field. The state will also verify the immigration status of every individual presented for incarceration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) computer background status check and to complete full background checks on any accompanying adults. Anyone identified as illegal will be detained to prevent them from committing further crimes.

We've already taken the first steps in Missouri, shutting down a state contractor who hired dozens of illegal workers who worked under false documents. In addition, state agencies are enacting a no tolerance policy through tough new contract protections. New audits will weed out any contractors who have employed illegal immigrants. If you're not supposed to work in the U.S., then you had better not be working for the state.

Another concern that has arisen twice in our area is illegal immigrants being used as cheap labor on state-subsidized, low-income housing projects. On Tuesday afternoon, Gov. Matt Blunt and I announced our strengthening of the rules that governs these subsidized projects. We are calling on all developers, contractors and sub-contractors working on a project that is funded directly or indirectly with state dollars to submit to the state within 30 days all I-9 forms, along with two additional forms of identification they were supposed to obtain for their files when hiring any new worker. We will then start randomly auditing state-funded projects to ensure that the contractors and subcontractors that organizations are hiring are not using an illegal workforce to shave costs and bilk taxpayers out of their hard-earned money.

Some people might see these measures as xenophobic, but let me stress that I am not against any LEGAL immigrant to this country or this state. On the contrary, I believe our strength as a nation has come from the people who have immigrated to America from distant shores, bringing their cultures, new ideas, and strong work ethics that have made this the most prosperous nation on Earth. This issue has affected the lives and well beings of Missourians, and I am not going to sit idly by and continue to wait on the federal government to act.

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 phone at (866) 271-2844.