



Facing Our Immigration Problem

JEFFERSON CITY — This past week, we started the process of assigning numbers to bills for the coming legislative session. One of my priorities in this group is [Senate Bill 858](#), a measure to address the illegal immigration problem in this state.

Illegal immigration is primarily a federal issue as the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency secures our nation's borders. So far, it seems like Washington has fallen woefully short on this issue. Fixing it is a multi-layered process that includes a comprehensive solution. But I also compare it to coming home and finding you have a water leak. Your first priority is not to buy new drywall and carpet to fix up your place. The first thing you need to do is shut off the water! My legislation includes that first step of turning off the spigot of illegal aliens flooding into Missouri.

Senate Bill 858 is a three-pronged attack to our problem of illegal immigration. We would address issues with individuals, the state government, and private employers to make sure those who should not be in this country are not assisted in maintaining that illegal status. Employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens would be held accountable for their actions. Those employers who receive state-administered or subsidized tax credits, tax abatements, or loans from the state and employ illegal aliens would be subject to criminal prosecution. Illegal aliens would not be allowed to attend all public universities in the state, and SB 858 would reiterate the federal law that says illegal aliens may not receive state or local public benefits with certain exceptions. Those applying for benefits will only qualify if they can provide proof of citizenship, residency, or lawful presence.

Some of the groundwork for my legislation has already been laid with the governor's initiatives to have the Highway Patrol, Capitol Police, and State Water Patrol check the citizenship status of anyone they stop. This common sense approach makes sure that we don't let those who should not be in this country stay here, especially if they are suspected of illegal activity.

Another initiative that the legislature will tackle in the coming session will keep illegal aliens from obtaining state driver's licenses. One only has to look at the proposal in New York that would have allowed illegal aliens to obtain driver's licenses, which would have been good anywhere else in the country. Not only could a proposal such as this endanger lives on our highways, but it would have given illegal aliens government documents that could help them stay in the country illegally even longer.

Our nation was founded by immigrants... those who worked hard, and by the sweat of their brows built a nation welcoming to those who would come here through legal means. They built an economic and democratic foundation that supports one of the highest standards of living anywhere in the world. But our foundation is in danger of being flooded and undermined with illegal aliens. It's time we made sure the water line is turned off.

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.