



Working to Secure Strong Immigration Policy

JEFFERSON CITY — Last week, I was privileged to participate in one of the nation's first-ever U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) summits that are being held around Missouri to equip law enforcement officers with the tools they need to fight illegal immigration.

The summits are a collaborative effort of the Missouri Highway Patrol and ICE. Last week's summit in Jefferson City attracted dozens of city, county and state law enforcement officers and was one in a series of nine statewide summits intended to train more than 500 Missouri Highway Patrol officers and other state law enforcement personnel to combat illegal immigration activity. (A St. Louis-area Summit is scheduled for 10 a.m. Wed., Feb. 6, at the Missouri Highway Patrol Troop C Headquarters near Town and Country.)

The ICE summits are the first of their kind in the nation and make Missouri one of the first states to conduct multiple training sessions for police officers. Summit participants receive tips for working with ICE and information about its specific programs, including the "287G" program. Under the 287G program, officers spend up to five weeks learning how to enforce immigration laws and are deputized to make arrests. In addition, they are also authorized to assist in identifying illegal immigrants in county jails and state prisons. The Missouri Highway Patrol hopes to have 25 Missouri officers enrolled in the specialized training soon.

As you know, stopping illegal immigration is one of my legislative priorities. My Senate Bill 858 under consideration would strengthen immigration laws and would hold employers accountable for hiring illegal aliens. Illegal aliens would also be prevented from attending public universities and from obtaining state or local public benefits.

Gov. Matt Blunt cited illegal immigration as one of the state's key priorities for the legislative session in his State of the State address last month. He addressed summit participants and underscored my own belief that Missouri welcomes legal immigrants, but will not tolerate the activities of illegal immigrants who blatantly disobey our laws. Gov. Blunt noted one of the state's success stories in the crackdown on illegal immigration. Since he authorized the Highway Patrol last year to begin checking immigration status on arrested suspects, 138 illegal aliens have been turned over to federal immigration authorities.

The governor's recommendation for next year's budget for immigration training and enforcement calls for more than a half-million dollars.

Working cooperatively with local, state and federal authorities to fight illegal immigration is an effective method to combating this state and national problem.

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.

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