



Illegal Immigration Measures Signed into Law

JEFFERSON CITY — I had the opportunity to visit several locations around the state this week with Governor Blunt as he signed legislation I sponsored and successfully advanced through the General Assembly this year regarding illegal immigration. The bill signing took place at the St. Charles Police Department and was repeated at several other state and local law enforcement agencies across the state.

Missouri's comprehensive new measures to fight illegal immigration — which were incorporated into House Bill 1549 — are some of the strongest in the country. I am very proud to say our state was not afraid to take on this tough issue — which has received little consideration from Washington, D.C. — or to become a leader in addressing this huge and financially-crippling problem that costs American and Missouri taxpayers countless millions of dollars in jobs, benefits and services each year.

Some of the key provisions of Missouri's groundbreaking legislation include:

- Barring the state from issuing driver's licenses to illegal immigrants
- Imposing criminal penalties for assisting illegal immigrants in obtaining driver's licenses
- Requiring public agencies to verify legal status of applicants for welfare benefits
- Requiring verification of legal employment status of all public employees
- Canceling state contracts for contractors that hire illegal immigrants
- Punishing employers who misclassify workers with penalties of \$50 per day per misclassified worker and up to a maximum of \$50,000 in fines
- Establishing citizen checks on every individual presented for incarceration

In addition, the new law prohibits Missouri from creating "sanctuary cities" — a practice by some U.S. cities that sidesteps the law by adopting ordinances that ban police from asking individuals about immigration status. The new law will also give the State Highway Patrol authority, training and resources to enforce immigration laws.

When Missouri lawmakers passed this bill during the final hours of the 2008 session, I felt confident we presented a very balanced approach to providing solutions to stop the harmful economic impact of illegal immigration activity.

Without a doubt, we are a nation of immigrants. As part of our rich tradition, we have always welcomed and will continue to welcome immigrants who legally follow the road to get here. However, we

cannot continue to reward those who break and ignore immigration and nationality laws — a scenario that results in a huge detrimental effect on our state's economy.

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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