



---

## **Immigration Reform Already Working for Missourians**

JEFFERSON CITY — With the General Assembly's success last session in passing strong immigration initiatives I forwarded, Missouri has once again shown its willingness to tackle the tough issues and lead the nation in the areas of reform. Our illegal immigration reforms are already showing positive results.

Since the governor's 2007 directive and our accompanying legislation that took effect on Aug. 28 of this year, 303 illegal immigrants have been detained through the Missouri Highway Patrol's efforts to check the status of anyone presented for incarceration. Beginning next year, all law enforcement agencies across the state will be required to check the legal status of anyone arrested and jailed, so that number is expected to be much higher.

Missouri law enforcement is now poised to take on an even larger role in immigration enforcement. Under the provisions of the new law, a group of state Highway Patrol officers has received federal ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) training so they can enforce immigration laws as part of their day-to-day law enforcement activities. So far, 18 state troopers have received the extensive training and will assist in conducting criminal investigations in cooperation with federal ICE offices in Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield. Of those 18 officers, 10 officers have also received 287g designation, which means they received additional training for administrative deporting of illegal aliens. The legislation allows for up to 25 officers to receive the specialized 287g training.

The Highway Patrol reports success in the number of recent illegal immigrant arrests. They indicate the new enforcement role has led to several arrests, including workers with expired visas found on gaming boats. More arrests are anticipated as this specialized criminal investigative work expands.

Since Missouri began participating in the E-verify system — a national employee screening process that checks the legal status of workers — in 2006, we have received 23,746 queries through employee verification requests — 13,186 of which were recorded from October 2007 through September 2008. From October 2006 through July 7 of this year, approximately 22 were non-compliant and employment terminated. While some said the verification system was ineffective and broken, Missouri has found it to be very successful and without any significant problems. In Missouri, public employers or anyone using state resources — or private employers who want to ensure protection from illegal hiring penalties — must use the system to check if employees are legally able to work here.

Coincidentally, a federal court recently upheld Arizona's state immigration measures that mandate the use of E-verify, and, like our law penalizes businesses by taking away licenses and other state resources when they engage in illegal hiring. The ruling is a positive step forward and I believe acknowledges the rights of states like Missouri to respond to the failure of the federal government to enact immigration reform.

We are a nation of immigrants. As part of our rich heritage, we have always welcomed and we will continue to welcome immigrants — but they must legally follow the road to get here.

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.

###