

For Immediate Release

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SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

One of the major issues your General Assembly has worked on this session is illegal immigration. This job should have been done by the federal government. Since our federal elected officials have failed to address the problem it falls to the individual states to deal with it.

Several bills were introduced in the Senate this session that attempt to deal with various problems regarding illegal immigration. These bills were all combined in committee. This week the Senate gave approval to Senate Substitute for Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bills 858, 750, 751, 927, 1186, 1255, 1268 & 1269. It is now in the House of Representatives.

I don't believe I have been contacted by anyone who objects to any person immigrating to the United States if they simply follow the rules. I understand why people in some countries would be anxious to move here and to enjoy our way of life. Most people are opposed to illegal immigrants who sneak into the country, take jobs away from those who are here legally, put citizens at risk by driving without a license or insurance, and take education and healthcare benefits from hardworking Missouri families.

Some of the provisions of this immigration bill are:

- Bars municipalities from adopting policies designed to give illegal aliens sanctuary,
- Limits the number of personal dependency withholding exemptions, for state income tax purposes, to not more than ten,
- Bars illegal aliens from attending all public universities in the state with the exception of those born on or before August 28, 2008, who have completed three full semesters in a Missouri high school immediately before applying to the university,
- Makes sure that taxpayer-funded benefits are only going to Missourians and not to illegal aliens,
- Employers are barred from employing unauthorized aliens,
- Driver's licenses shall not be issued to persons who cannot prove lawful presence,
- It would be a felony to transport or conceal an illegal immigrant in this state,
- Law enforcement agencies would be required to verify immigration status after arrests, stopping them from evading federal authorities before they can be deported.

There were concerns raised by business groups and employers about requirements to use the E-Verify federal database to determine whether or not a new employee is eligible to work in the United States. I think most agree that this system does have its problems. However, a compromise was reached with private businesses.

Businesses with government contracts of five thousand dollars or more or who receive tax breaks or state-supported loans would be required to use the program. Other private businesses would not be required to use E-Verify, but if they are caught knowingly hiring an illegal alien they could lose their business license. If caught unknowingly hiring an illegal immigrant, they would be required to immediately fire them and begin using the service.

While the bill passed by the Senate this week does not address every situation, it will be a step forward. It is reported that in the last 15 years the estimated population of illegal immigrants in Missouri has gone from 10,000 to more than 55,000. We simply must do something to protect our state and its citizens.

As always, I appreciate any suggestions you may have that will help improve the lives of the people of this legislative district. You are welcome to contact me at: Missouri Senate, 201 West Capitol Avenue, Room 420, Jefferson City, MO 65101, my telephone number is 573-751-1882 or email at chuck.purgason@senate.mo.gov.