

April 14, 2008

State Crackdowns; Other Enforcement Busts

State and local authorities in several locations continued efforts to crack down on undocumented immigration. In Rhode Island, Governor Don Carcieri signed an executive order directing state police to enter into an agreement with federal immigration authorities to permit access by the police to immigration databases. Such access would give them the ability to check the immigration status of criminals, victims, witnesses, and those supplying the police with confidential tips, according to state police Major Steven O'Donnell. The prison system is expected to negotiate a similar agreement. The executive order also requires businesses and state agencies to verify the status of employees.

As of March 3, 2008, Prince William County in Virginia requires police officers to inquire about immigration status during arrests or traffic stops whenever there is probable cause to suspect that an immigration violation has occurred. The Board of County Supervisors resolution also requires verification of immigration status by county staff before certain public services can be provided. The crackdown is expected to cost the county millions of dollars in enforcement costs and to affect tax revenues. The county has proposed a 28 percent property tax increase to make up for budget shortfalls.

In New York, senior executives of large corporations, small and midsize companies, and investment banks have expressed concerns that harsh immigration policies are threatening New York City's ability to compete with foreign cities because the people chosen for high level jobs cannot gain admission to the United States. Some officials reportedly said that they have shifted dozens of jobs to other financial capitals because of the difficulty in obtaining visas for foreign workers. Kathryn S. Wylde, president of the Partnership for New York City, said, "New York's ability to compete with London, which has much more open immigration, or with the emerging financial capitals in Asia and the Middle East, depends on mobility of talent, both in terms of new and current employees." She noted that opposing business immigration is "a 20th-century, pre-globalization mentality that thinks somehow American companies and jobs can grow if we cut ourselves off from foreign talent."

Additionally, five managers of the pallet management division of IFCO Systems North America were recently indicted on felony charges of conspiracy to harbor, encourage and induce, and transport illegal aliens. The evidence included e-mails between middle managers and their superiors. Seven middle managers had pleaded guilty to charges a year ago and promised to cooperate in the investigation. In 2006, raids were conducted on 52 IFCO workshops, which revealed problems with the Social Security numbers of half of the company's 5,800 employees. The news release announcing the indictments is available at

<http://www.ice.gov/pi/news/newsreleases/articles/080228albany.htm>.