



EMAIL BULLETIN

MISSOURI JOINS THE HOST OF STATES PROPOSING STATE-LEVEL IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT BILLS

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Koster-Green Reform Bill Would Mandate Employer Enrollment in the Basic Pilot Program

On Tuesday, January 23, 2007, Missouri State Senators Chris Koster (R-Harrisonville) and Tim Green (D-St. Louis) introduced the Missouri Omnibus Immigration Act, aimed at achieving comprehensive immigration reform at the *state-level*. With this newly proposed legislation, Missouri becomes the latest state to take up the issue of enacting immigration laws that are stricter than, and arguably in conflict with, U.S. immigration law. The Missouri proposal would mandate employer participation in the Basic Pilot program despite known program flaws identified by, *inter alia*, the U.S. Government Accountability Office. The proposed legislation would also deny undocumented immigrants access to even the most basic services and benefits, such accommodation in rental housing owned by private property owners. Further, undocumented students, many of whom grew up in the United States, would be denied admission to state colleges and universities in Missouri.

While proponents of the bill argue that state action is necessary to fill the void left by U.S. Government failure to address the growing problem of illegal immigration, draconian provisions that deny basic housing and educational opportunities to children and youth who are present in the United States through no fault of their own are likely to spark much warranted criticism. Some speculate that, should such measures pass, the U.S. Government would be forced to take action on legislative proposals for immigration reform and relief that have lost traction during two years of partisan bickering. Notably, one such proposal, the bipartisan Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act of 2005 (S. 2075) (“DREAM Act”), includes provisions that recognize the plight of undocumented minors in the United States, approves of their being afforded opportunities for higher education in the United States, and provides them with a path to lawful status in the United States. Both the purpose and tone of the DREAM Act are diametrically opposed to the provisions set forth in the proposed Missouri legislation.