

# Bush Plans Immigration Crackdown

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 9 — The Bush administration plans to announce numerous steps on Friday to secure the border with Mexico, speed the expulsion of illegal immigrants and step up enforcement of immigration laws, administration officials say.

The effort stems, in part, from White House frustration with the failure of Congress to approve President Bush's proposals to overhaul the nation's immigration laws and grant legal status to most of the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants. In debate on that legislation, many Republicans said Mr. Bush should first enforce existing laws more aggressively.

Carlos M. Gutierrez, the secretary of commerce, and Michael Chertoff, the secretary of homeland security, have invited employers to attend a briefing on the new initiatives on Friday.

Under the most significant change, disclosed earlier this week, many employers could be required to fire employees who used false Social Security numbers. At the same time, federal officials would crack down on companies employing substantial numbers of illegal immigrants.

Administration officials told members of Congress on Thursday night that they would speed up construction of fences along the Mexican border, hire more Border Patrol agents and detain more of the immigrants caught illegally crossing the border.

Moreover, administration officials said they would try to match up records of the arrival and departure of noncitizens entering and leaving the United States. Members of Congress say this exit-control system, required under a 1996 law, is essential to securing the nation's borders, but many lawmakers say the administration has been slow in carrying out the law.

In addition, administration officials said they would train more state and local law enforcement officers to help enforce federal immigration laws. Since 2002, the federal government has trained more than 300 police and correctional officers. But members of Congress say the administration could do much more.

Administration officials said they were also planning to step up efforts to arrest and deport illegal immigrants who were members of street gangs. And they said federal agents would fan out across the country to hunt down "alien fugitives" who had been ordered to leave the United States but failed to comply.

Senator John Cornyn, Republican of Texas, has repeatedly urged the administration to take action against such “alien absconders.”

Under a 1986 law, employers must ask job applicants for documents to verify that they are United States citizens or immigrants authorized to work here. Administration officials said they wanted to simplify this process for employers by limiting the documents that could be used.

Mr. Bush’s immigration proposals collapsed on the Senate floor on June 28, after three weeks of debate. Mr. Bush had repeatedly promised tougher enforcement, but many lawmakers said they did not trust him to fulfill his promises.

“The federal government has failed and has rightfully lost the trust of the people” on this issue, said Senator Tom Coburn, Republican of Oklahoma.

In debate on the Senate bill, Mr. Coburn proposed an amendment that would have required the administration to enforce all existing immigration laws and demonstrate “operational control” of the Mexican border as a precondition to granting legal status to illegal immigrants.

Rosemary E. Jenks, director of government relations at Numbers USA, a major foe of illegal immigration, said the steps being taken by the administration were “long overdue.”

But Laura Foote Reiff, a lawyer who advises companies on immigration issues, said employers might have to dismiss many workers whose Social Security numbers could not be verified.

“People will be leaving the work force in droves,” Ms. Reiff said. “It will be like a hurricane hitting the country.”