

Conservative Texas legislators take new aim at illegal immigration

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AUSTIN – Conservative Texas legislators made it clear Monday that they'll again push for strict state laws to crack down on illegal immigration when lawmakers convene in January.

A chief area they're likely to concentrate on is encouraging local police departments to work with U.S. officials to enforce federal immigration laws, which the House State Affairs Committee is studying.

Texas lawmakers last year provided about \$110 million in border security money for state and local law enforcement but did not – despite some initial proposals – require local officials to enforce immigration laws.

Rep. Leo Berman, R-Tyler, told the committee that he wants to see legislative proposals in 2009 requiring voters to show photo identification to prove their citizenship, penalizing employers who hire illegal immigrants, and paying for local law enforcement to train officers to enforce federal immigration laws.

Irving Police Chief Larry Boyd outlined his department's policy of screening every person brought to the local jail with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Since September 2006, the program has identified 2,600 illegal immigrants, he said.

The program has been emulated elsewhere in North Texas.

It also has generated protests from Latino rights advocates who say the police are using racial profiling.