

# Govt. stepping up immigration efforts

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WASHINGTON — The Bush administration plans to step up immigration enforcement by raising fines on employers who hire undocumented workers, overhauling temporary worker programs and speeding up deployment of border agents, according to a summary of the plans.

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez planned to announce broad immigration changes at a news conference Friday.

Some of the initiatives are similar to proposals contained in recent immigration legislation, although they are not nearly as sweeping as the bill that failed to pass the Senate. Other measures are already under way.

An outline of the announcement, obtained by The Associated Press from a congressional aide, said the administration plans to expand the list of international gangs whose members are automatically denied admission to the U.S., reduce processing times for immigrant background checks and install by the end of the year an exit system so the departure of foreigners from the country can be recorded at airports and seaports.

In addition, employers will face possible criminal sanctions if they don't fire employees unable to clear up problems with their Social Security numbers.

Also, the Homeland Security Department will ask states to voluntarily share their driver's license photos and records with the agency for use in an employment verification system. The sharing is meant to help employers detect fraudulent licenses, according to the summary.

A spokesman for the Homeland Security Department declined to comment because the announcement had not been made. The Commerce Department press office also declined comment.

Chertoff alluded to the new enforcement tactics in a speech in Boston on Wednesday, calling to it "tool sharpening."

"We shouldn't have a patchwork of laws. We should be doing a comprehensive federal solution, but we haven't got that thing done," Chertoff said. "What I can tell you is we will certainly use every enforcement tool that we have, and every resource that we have available, to tackle the problem."

President Bush suffered a major political defeat when Senate immigration legislation failed to pass this year.

The legislation was opposed by many conservatives who complained that Americans don't trust the government to start new immigration programs because existing immigration laws are not being enforced.

The Senate bill would have allowed millions of illegal immigrants to obtain legal status and eventually apply for legal residency. It also would have created a guest worker program and stepped up border security.

Some members have kept up efforts to tighten the border. Last month, the Senate added \$3 billion to a Homeland Security bill to be used for U.S.-Mexico border security.