

City Council requires E-Verify for businesses

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**By JOHN F. HILL
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The Murrieta City Council on Tuesday mandated the use of E-Verify for all businesses in the city.

The Department of Homeland Security program is aimed at curbing the employment of illegal immigrants and other ineligible workers.

It checks a prospective employee's Social Security number and other information against government databases to make sure the person can legally work in the country.

The measure was approved unanimously. The council all but agreed to the ordinance during a previous meeting, but held off on a vote over some technical concerns.

The law makes the use of E-Verify mandatory to get a Murrieta business license. It calls for code enforcement officers to check out any allegations of noncompliance.

Penalties range from a few hundred dollars to the loss of a business license for repeat offenders.

There is no charge for businesses to use the program.

Murrieta has used for several years it to check out new city employees.

Resident Francisco Urbina spoke against the law Tuesday, saying undocumented workers were being used as scapegoats during a deep recession.

"I don't think businesses need more red tape, and I question whether there's perhaps a hidden form of racism against undocumented workers," Urbina said.

But Councilman Douglas McAllister said the city was interested in promoting the rule of law, comparing the practice of employing illegal immigrants to slavery.

"I take exception that, by standing up for folks and refusing to allow them to be put into this modern form of slavery, we're racists," McAllister said.

Murrieta is the latest southwest Riverside County city to mandate E-Verify. Temecula, Lake Elsinore and Menifee all passed similar ordinances after anti-illegal immigration activists demonstrated at city councils across the area this summer.