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U.S. Businesses Everywhere: Are Your Immigration Papers In Order?

The Obama administration's somewhat under-the-radar crackdown on illegal immigration is expanding. And for now, one of its primary targets is U.S. business.

The federal government is requiring as many as 1,000 companies to turn over their employment records for inspection. Click [here](#) for the story, from the WSJ's Miriam Jordan.

The audits, which the government is expected to make public in the next few days, represent the biggest such operation since 2009. At that time, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a DHS unit, conducted an auditing sweep of businesses working in public safety and national security.

The latest round of audits targets at least a few regional fast-food chains, according to people with knowledge of the operation.

Federal agents are expected to visit the companies in coming days to notify them of the requirement.

The big new sweep comes as state and federal lawmakers who champion tough immigration enforcement are pushing to mandate that all U.S. companies use a government-run electronic database to verify whether their new hires are legal workers. Currently, only federal contractors are required by law to use the program, called E-Verify.

The enforcement approach allows both Democrats and Republicans to argue that they're tackling illegal immigration even in the absence of major new legislation on the issue. Both sides can tout enforcement as an effort to protect American workers from illegal immigrants, perceived as creating unfair competition for scarce jobs.

Audits last year ensnared the fast-growing burrito chain Chipotle (a burrito from which is pictured), which in recent months was forced to dismiss hundreds of illegal workers in Minnesota. An ongoing investigation of 60 Chipotle restaurants in Virginia and Washington, D.C., will likely force the company to shed more workers, according to immigration authorities.

