

# LAPD Chief Says Illegal Immigrants Should Get Driver's Licenses

by Eyder Peralta

Whether undocumented immigrants are granted driver's licenses has been one of those mainstay questions in the country.

Yesterday, Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck jumped firmly into the debate, arguing that immigrants in the country illegally should be given some kind driver's permit.

Beck argued that it was a matter of public safety.

## [The AP reports:](#)

"The chief concern is safety on the road by forcing all drivers to take the rigorous testing to get a license, and the ability of police to identify the people they encounter, Beck said.

"Why wouldn't you want to put people through a rigorous testing process? Why wouldn't you want to better identify people who are going to be here?' [Beck said]. 'It doesn't make any sense to me. And we could increase safety on the roads. When you make things illegal you cause a lot of other things by chain reaction.'

One type of crime that Beck believes would decrease is hit-and-run accidents, because illegal immigrant drivers wouldn't have to fear being caught without a license at the scene of such accidents, he said.

[The Los Angeles Times reports](#) that the chief becomes one of the most prominent figures to "to support the idea that state lawmakers have battled over repeatedly in the last 15 years."

"The reality is that all the things that we've done — 'we' being the state of California — over the last 14, 16 years have not reduced the problem one iota, haven't reduced undocumented aliens driving without licenses," Beck told the *Times*. "So we have to look at what we're doing. When something doesn't work over and over and over again, my view is that you should reexamine it to see if there is another way that makes more sense."

Beck then went on to say that he supported a system in which illegal immigrants receive provisional licenses.

The *Times* reports that some groups moved quickly to criticize Beck. The *Times* reports:

"Bob Dane, a spokesman for the Federation for American Immigration Reform, challenged Beck's notion that allowing illegal immigrants to have licenses would improve road safety, saying the move would 'represent a threat to public safety and national security.' He added that

issuing the licenses would be 'providing a gold-plated membership card into society for people who are not here legally.'"

California is important to watch, because it's a state on the forefront of immigration policies, so its actions on the issue are watched by other states closely.