

CLINTON HITS AGAIN AT ILLEGAL WORKERS EMPLOYERS FACE BAR FROM U.S. CONTRACTS

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Body

In another election-year salvo against illegal immigration, President Clinton on Tuesday barred employers of undocumented workers from winning federal contracts for a year.

As a result of Clinton's executive order, businesses that knowingly hire employees who are illegally in the country will be unable to compete for new government contracts, mostly for jobs such as landscaping federal property and cleaning U.S. buildings.

"When it comes to enforcing our nation's immigration laws, we mean business," Clinton said in announcing the order.

The White House noted that thousands of employers could be affected by the ban, but it is unlikely that many will fall prey to it.

That is because U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service agents would first have to prove the businesses knew the employees were not authorized to work in America - a charge the overworked INS enforcers have found difficult to make stick since Congress cracked down on illegal hiring in 1986.

In a year in which immigration is expected to be a major issue in the presidential campaign, particularly in vote-rich California, Clinton's order represents the latest in a series of high-profile initiatives trumpeted by the administration as evidence of the president's commitment to curbing the flow of illegal immigrants across the nation's borders.

One initiative is a crackdown on the small percentage of immigrants who commit crimes, with beefed up efforts to detain and deport them. Another is an ongoing tightening of enforcement along the border with Mexico.

Later in the day, White House press secretary Michael McCurry denied that politics influenced the president's issuing of the order.

"There is no grounds to suggest this is an executive order based on politics," McCurry said. "This president has consistently said he would do a better job of protecting our borders and making sure that immigration to the United States occurs in a legal fashion."

As he did in his State of the Union address last month, Clinton also equated immigration curbs with protecting U.S. jobs.

"America's jobs belong to America's legal workers," the president said in the statement announcing the order.

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As part of a crackdown on **illegal workers** in connection with the presidential directive, federal authorities Monday raided a construction site in Atlanta and arrested 20 Mexicans and Hondurans who were working on a new \$200 million federal office building. The **illegal** immigrants, who were earning from \$7 to \$14 an hour, were working directly in front of the Atlanta office of the **U.S.** Immigration and Naturalization Service.

On Feb. 8, federal agents arrested 22 Mexicans who were working illegally at construction sites on the Camp Lejeune Marine Corps base in North Carolina, the INS said. The **workers** were employed by six companies holding federal **contracts** worth a total of \$37 million.

Graphic

Photo;
PHOTO:

President **Clinton** said the order protects **U.S.** jobs.
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