

## **Blunt sets state on trail of illegal immigrants THE PLAN • Random inspections at some construction sites. • Governor wants state agents deputized to enforce federal law.**

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### **Body**

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**Random state inspections** of some **construction sites** to look for **illegal immigrant** workers and routine checks of the residency status of people arrested by the Missouri Highway Patrol are part of new initiatives launched by Gov. Matt **Blunt**.

"**Illegal immigrants** are openly breaking our **laws**," **Blunt** said at a news conference Tuesday at OFallon City Hall. "Because Washington has failed to deal with this issue, **states** must do even more."

The worksite **inspections**, by the **state** Department of Economic Development, will be limited to privately developed projects benefiting from **state** tax credits or other economic incentive programs.

**Blunt** said his directive also demands that such companies recertify in writing within the next 30 days that they, their contractors and subcontractors do not employ **illegal immigrants**.

Any company discovered to be using **illegal immigrants** will be banned for at least five years from getting such **state** aid. That's the maximum penalty allowed by **state law**, he said.

"With this measure and others, we will help to ensure that Missouri taxpayers are not somehow subsidizing **illegal** immigration," **Blunt** said.

**Blunt** came to OFallon to announce the economic agency's new effort because the city has had two controversies involving allegations of **illegal immigrant** workers at **construction** projects aided by **state** and local bonds.

On Monday, the **governor** issued his separate order on arrests by the Highway Patrol. That order also applies to the Missouri Water Patrol and the **state** Capitol police.

Officers with those agencies have begun verifying the immigration status of every person they arrest.

**Blunt** also has told the three **state** agencies to work out an agreement with the **federal** government to allow officers to be **deputized** to directly **enforce federal** immigration **laws** and to get special training. Only six other **states** have such an arrangement, **Blunt** said.

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**Blunt** added that he's asking **federal** officials for "expedited approval" of the agreement, which would allow more than 1,000 **state** officers to take **illegal immigrants** to **federal** detention centers instead of having to wait for **federal** authorities to do so.

"This is a significant force multiplier for **enforcing** our immigration **laws**," **Blunt** said, noting that the **state** has only about 50 **federal agents** available for such duty.

**Blunt** also is encouraging local **law** enforcement agencies to make similar agreements with the **federal** government. St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann, who was at the news conference, said he and Sheriff Tom Neer already were **planning** to do that.

In the most recent workplace controversy in **O'Fallon**, city officials allege that Clayton-based developer Peter Hennessey is using subcontractors that employ **illegal immigrant** workers on the **construction** of Southernside, a 210-unit affordable-housing complex on Weldon Spring Road, just west of Highway K.

Hennessey denies the claim and has said the city is pushing a political agenda because the **site** has nonunion and out-of-**state** workers.

Hennessey's project is supported by \$13 million in **state** and **federal** tax credits issued by the **state** Housing Development Commission and \$13.5 million in tax-exempt bonds approved by the St. Charles County Industrial Development Authority.

St. Charles County Prosecutor Jack Banas has asked Hennessey for employment records from Aug. 1, 2004, to the present. Hennessey's attorney, Larry Fleming, filed a petition in circuit court Thursday saying the information request was too broad. Both Fleming and Banas said they probably will meet soon to narrow the scope of Banas' request.

Last week, the **state** housing commission, at **Blunt's** urging, said it would enact tougher rules to guard against **illegal** workers on such projects. **Blunt** said Tuesday his directive to the economic development department would supplement whatever the housing commission enacts.

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