

# **Anne Arundel County Is Latest To Challenge Illegal Workers; Businesses to Certify Immigration Status of Employees**

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## **Body**

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**Anne Arundel County**, the **latest** Washington area jurisdiction to take a new and public position against **illegal immigration**, has announced that **businesses** with **county** contracts will be required to sign affidavits attesting that they do not employ **workers** who are in the country illegally.

**County** contracts have long required **businesses** to comply with federal law, but aides to **County** Executive John R. Leopold (R) -- who issued the executive order last week -- said the new language will allow the **county** to more easily cancel contracts with violators.

"It gives the **county** a better opportunity and a stronger means of terminating the contract because of the breach of the condition," said David A. Plymyer, a deputy **county** attorney. "They're not only violating the federal law, they're also violating the certification to the **county**."

Leopold, who as a state delegate voted against measures granting driver's licenses and in-state tuition to **illegal** immigrants, said his "actions should come as no surprise" to anyone. As part of his overall effort to reduce expenditures in the **county**'s 2008 fiscal plan, Leopold cut about \$115,000 for El Centro de Ayuda and the Organization for Hispanic and Latin Americans, which provide job referrals, legal assistance and other services to Hispanic immigrants.

"My first obligation to the taxpayers of the **county** is to make sure their resources are used prudently," he said in an interview.

Leopold said his order is similar to initiatives by state governments in Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Missouri and Oklahoma. Loudoun and Prince William **counties** have passed resolutions to address concerns over **illegal immigration**.

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Gigi Guzman, former chairman of the Maryland Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, said **Anne Arundel's** move was not surprising. "Everybody is doing it," she said.

She said the movement to crack down on **illegal** immigrants and **businesses** that employ them risks leaving working families unable to support themselves. "It is going to create a hardship for them," she said. "Many of those families have American-born children."

Leopold said that he issued the order after receiving complaints from "legitimate contractors." He did not specify the contractors, and aides reached **later** said they did not know the names of the companies.

"I weigh the cries of discrimination against the legitimate concerns of **businesses** who feel that they will be placed at a competitive disadvantage against **businesses** who hire **illegal** immigrants," Leopold said.

He said that obligation is especially strong as the **county** and the state face "enormous financial **challenges**," particularly the need to provide the infrastructure related to an influx of **workers** to Fort Meade as part of the Pentagon's base realignment plan. The **county** can't "overburden taxpayers with the demands of **illegal** immigrants," he said.

"Clearly, the **challenges** are more daunting today and require adherence to the law," Leopold said.

Leopold said the **county** would not expend resources "to look over the shoulder of **businesses**." Instead, the **county** will respond to complaints it receives about **businesses** not complying with the law.

Staff writer William Wan contributed to this report.

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