

## **IMMIGRATION; \$1 Billion Rise Proposed for Enforcement**

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### **Body**

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The Clinton administration yesterday proposed spending an additional \$ 1 billion to crack down on illegal immigration at the border and the workplace by adding hundreds more immigration agents, expanding deportations and experimenting with computerized identity checks for job seekers.

Nearly half of the new money, one of the few spending initiatives in the new budget proposal, is promised to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), which would get a 24 percent budget increase to \$ 2.6 billion. On top of increases in the past two years this would represent a 71 percent rise in the agency's budget since 1993.

The other large chunk of money, more than one-third of the additional funding, would go to state governments to help pay for providing emergency medical care to illegal immigrants, incarcerating those who have committed crimes here, and some education programs. The Customs Service, the Labor Department and other agencies of the Justice Department would get the remaining funds.

Contending that the administration is trying to make up for the neglect of its predecessors, Attorney General Janet Reno said at a news conference, "three years ago it was clear that this administration had inherited a stepchild immigration agency that had suffered decades of neglect." The proposed funding increases, she said, are part of a strategy to "control the border and bring the INS into the 20th century before the 21st century."

The major challenges to the administration's plan are likely to come from those who demand more rather than less spending.

"This is not a strategic policy plan to combat illegal immigration as much as an effort at political appeasement, and it does not begin to remedy the crisis that afflicts California," said Leslie Goodman, spokesman for California Gov. Pete Wilson (R), who has been President Clinton's chief antagonist on illegal immigration.

Rep. Lamar S. Smith (R-Tex.), chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on immigration, said: "It is a promising start, but it is not enough. We welcome the fact that the president is putting the money in the right places, but we need to do more."

One area of spending that Smith said he expected Congress to expand involves proposals by the Commission on Immigration Reform, headed by former representative Barbara Jordan (D-Tex.), to help employers identify illegal immigrants who are trying to get jobs.

Less than 3 percent of the cost of the administration's new immigration initiative -- \$ 28.3 million -- is designated to fund pilot projects recommended by the Jordan commission.

Moreover, INS Commissioner Doris Meissner said yesterday that the administration envisioned spending three years experimenting with various alternatives before deciding whether to implement the centerpiece of the commission's recommendations -- a national computer registry of all workers.

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Controversy also was developing around the administration's **proposal** to fund part of the increased spending by charging a fee for legal border crossing. The fees of \$ 1.50 per person and \$ 3 per vehicle would be used to pay for improved **immigration** and customs facilities at the border.

But the **proposal** instantly provoked opposition from border communities that rely economically on regular and rapid visits by Mexicans and Canadians. With legislators from border states almost unanimous in their opposition, Smith said, "the crossing fee is just too controversial to pass Congress, and it would be better to just forget it."

Much of the administration's **proposal** builds on efforts launched last year at the urging of Congress to fight illegal **immigration** at the border. The new budget plan would add 700 Border Patrol agents to an existing force of nearly 5,000, about the same increase as last year. Envisioning much greater efforts in the future, the administration promised to bring total Border Patrol strength to 7,000 agents by the end of the century.

On another front, the administration's **proposal** envisions adding 365 new INS investigators to the personnel that enforce the law against employing illegal immigrants, a 73 percent increase in an area that received diminished resources in recent years.

In addition, the Department of Labor would get 202 new employees to investigate violations of labor standards in sectors of the economy that are known to employ large numbers of illegal immigrants.

@CAPTION: Attorney General Janet Reno contends the administration is trying to make up for the neglect of its predecessors. Rep. Lamar S. Smith (R-Tex.) says the budget request is "a promising start, but it is not enough."

## Graphic

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