

# **Bush Pledges Action on Borders; Southwest Is Promised Agents, Jail Space for Illegal Immigrants**

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## **Body**

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President **Bush** flew into the heart of the nation's volatile debate over **illegal** immigration Monday and defended his administration's efforts to control the nearby **border** with Mexico after a surge of criticism from across the political spectrum.

Two weeks after the Democratic governors of Arizona and New Mexico declared states of emergency along the **border**, **Bush** used a Medicare speech here to **promise** residents an increasingly robust federal campaign that will deploy more **agents** and provide more detention **space** to stop those trying to sneak into the country.

"We have an obligation to enforce the **borders**," **Bush** said to applause. "I understand it's putting a strain on your resources. . . . What I'm telling you is there's a lot of people working hard to get the job done, but there is more we can do."

He stressed that the chorus of grievances emerging from **border** states in recent weeks had seized his attention. "It's important for the people of this state to understand your voices are being heard in Washington, D.C.," **Bush** said. In emphasizing beefed-up enforcement, though, he made no mention of his stalled proposal to grant temporary guest-worker status to millions of **illegal immigrants**.

After leaving Arizona, **Bush** headed to California, another state where **illegal** immigration has long provoked angry debate. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has come under pressure from fellow Republicans to follow the lead of his neighbors and declare a state of emergency along the **border**. **Bush** drew strong applause in Rancho Cucamonga when he vowed to enforce **border** control.

The decibel level over **illegal** immigration in this part of the country has risen in recent months amid anger at the federal government for not doing more. A group calling itself the Minuteman Project took it upon itself to patrol the **border** for a time, drawing criticism from **Bush**, who deemed its members "vigilantes." Then Govs. Janet Napolitano of Arizona and Bill Richardson of New Mexico declared emergencies to release emergency funding and to get Washington's attention.

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The **Bush** administration responded last week when Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff announced that he would coordinate more closely with the **border** states and bolster enforcement efforts. Napolitano greeted **Bush** when Air Force One landed Monday, and he **promised** her that he was attentive to the issue, according to the governor's press secretary, Jeanine L'Ecuyer. "It shows some movement, and we're pleased about that," L'Ecuyer said. "That's more progress than we had two weeks ago."

Also greeting **Bush** was Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who is sponsoring legislation to authorize a guest-worker program permitting new **immigrants** to work jobs that citizens do not want. The president paused on the tarmac to help celebrate McCain's 69th birthday, but on a blazing Arizona day, the cake melted before he could taste it.

For **Bush**, the start of a two-day departure from his Texas vacation allowed him to refocus, however briefly, on domestic issues after peace demonstrations outside his ranch this month drew sustained attention to the Iraq war. But even on this day, he was not able to escape the topic.

Hundreds of protesters lined his motorcade routes in Arizona and California, holding up signs such as "**Bush** the Lying Turd" and "Chicken George," a reference to his refusal to meet again with Cindy Sheehan, the mother of a soldier killed in Iraq who set up camp near his Texas ranch demanding an audience. A competing crowd gathered in California waving flags and signs such as "Support Our President."

**Bush** mentioned the continuing violence during his speeches, but drew hope from the drafting of an Iraqi constitution despite objections from the nation's disaffected Sunni minority. "I am very optimistic about Iraq," he said, "because first of all I believe deep in everybody's soul is the desire to be free."

The formal purpose of **Bush**'s trip was to continue educating senior citizens about upcoming changes to the Medicare system and urge them to sign up for the new prescription drug benefit that takes effect in January. The White House announced that it has further refined the drug program so that Medicare beneficiaries in nearly every state will have the choice of a prescription plan with premiums under \$20 a month.

"This is a good deal for our seniors," **Bush** said. "We have done our duty in Washington, D.C.," he added. "We've upgraded an important program and made it better."

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) issued a statement blasting the **Bush** program as "a fatally flawed" law that "includes billions in subsidies for HMOs and big drug companies at the expense of the Medicare program that seniors know and trust."

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