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Reporter Wendy Hundley covers Lewisville and Flower Mound. The community is encouraged to contribute by joining the conversation on this blog.

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DMN Editorial on Lewisville's E-Verify proposal

12:54 PM Wed, Jan 13, 2010 | Permalink

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Here's what The Dallas Morning News' editorial board had to say about Lewisville's proposal to expand the E-Verify program:

To better understand our nation's problem enforcing its immigration laws, let's visit our old friends, supply and demand.

Supply is represented by the thousands, if not millions, of people living in distant lands willing to hazard illegal entry into the U.S. to find work. Demand is those employers willing to look the other way, in violation of the law, to hire them.

Supply isn't going away, even in a down economic time. Demand is a legitimate target.

Clearly, this newspaper continues to support a comprehensive overhaul of our immigration laws that provides border security, interior enforcement, a guest-worker program and a reasonable path to legalization. This was the case long before the bitter immigration fight of 2007, which led to little substantive change.

The Obama administration has sent strong signals that it wants Congress to try again this year, even in the face of approaching mid-term elections. We are cautiously optimistic, if only for those taxpayers and companies trapped in an unworkable system but still trying to do the right thing.

One right thing is to use E-Verify, a federally maintained electronic database of Social Security and other records. Employers can access the system to check the immigration status of workers or prospective hires. Legal challenges and legislative timidity have kept E-Verify from becoming a mandate, despite a success rate of better than 96 percent and increasingly small percentage of errors.

Here in North Texas, Lewisville City Council member John Gorena is tired of waiting. Lewisville already uses E-Verify to clear city employees for paychecks, and Gorena wants to extend that to any contractors the city hires. "Our tax dollars should go to those companies that are doing their due diligence," he says.

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Expanding the use of E-Verify to limit employers' use of illegal immigrant labor makes sense, unless you favor the shadowy underground labor market we have today. Lewisville's city staff is researching Gorena's proposal, with further discussion scheduled for a Feb. 4-6 retreat.

Other city officials have reasonable questions about the details. How far would the measure go? Would this ultimately bar the city from shopping with local retailers who decline to use E-Verify? Would it place Lewisville at a competitive disadvantage as the only Texas city so restricting its contractor pool?

No North Texas city wants to face the divisive battles made infamous in Farmers Branch, another Dallas suburb that attempted to step in where federal immigration law failed. Gorena says he's less concerned about that than making sure Lewisville is doing all it can for its residents.

For our part, we're confident smart staffers in Gorena's city can fill in the details and help craft an ordinance that would accomplish his goal - minimizing the hiring of illegal workers - while protecting the city from undue liability.

In the absence of federal reform, a city like Lewisville will have to take the first step, perhaps leading to a longer-range solution like the Legislature passing a law that forbids Texas municipalities and school districts from using contractors who failed to E-Verify their workers.

From city to state to the halls of Congress and - who knows? - perhaps one day a true overhaul of our nation's immigration laws. We can dream, can't we?

What is E-Verify?

•E-Verify is an Internet-based system that allows an employer, using information reported on an employee's Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, to determine the eligibility of that employee to work in the United States.

•Companies can access E-Verify online and compare an employee's Form I-9 information with more than 444 million records in the Social Security Administration's database, and more than 60 million records in Department of Homeland Security immigration databases.

•There is no charge to employers to use E-Verify.

•The E-Verify system is operated by the Department of Homeland Security in partnership with the Social Security Administration.

•More than 175,000 employers are enrolled in the program, with more than 8.5 million queries run through the system in fiscal 2009.

•E-Verify is mandatory for some employers, such as those with federal contracts or subcontracts that contain the Federal Acquisition Regulation E-Verify clause and employers in certain states.

•Federal contractors and subcontractors are required to use E-Verify as of Sept. 8, 2009. Executive Order 12989 mandates the electronic verification of all employees working on any federal contract.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Homeland Security at dhs.gov

Comments

Posted by **Brittancus** @ 6:17 PM Wed, Jan 13, 2010

Understand that--CALIFORNIA-- is broke, primarily due to the cost of illegal immigrants and large families.Arizona is following close, as are all border states. People are taxed more to pay for their welfare, their free education, free health

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