

## **Norris Introduces Bill to Combat Illegal Immigration**

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Sen. Mark Norris (R-Collierville) introduced legislation last week authorizing Tennessee Highway Patrol officers to receive federal training in immigration and customs enforcement.

Norris, who chairs the Senate Transportation and Safety Committee which oversees the Department of Safety and Highway Patrol, cited the importance of curbing illegal immigration.

“Our troopers must have the authority in the course of their regular duties to detain, interrogate and arrest illegal aliens,” Norris said. “That is not the case without the federal training and certification provided under this legislation.”

Since 1996, Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Naturalization Act, later amended by the Homeland Security Act, has given state government the ability to enforce federal immigration law with proper training and supervision by federal authorities. Tennessee has not taken advantage of it, and Norris thinks the Department of Safety’s participation is overdue.

“Funding may have been an issue, but that should no longer be the case,” Norris said upon learning that President Bush had signed legislation to provide funding for the training. The Homeland Security Appropriations Act was signed into law on Wednesday.

“To participate, Tennessee must enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Homeland Security, and that requires legislative action on our part,” Norris said. “My bill is the first step in the process.”

“Illegal immigration must be addressed more effectively at all levels of government,” said Norris. “Proper training should actually enhance our law enforcement and homeland security efforts, and it will help protect lawful residents, foreign and domestic, from criminal and terrorist activity.”

Norris, who also serves as a committee officer of the 16-state Southern Legislative Conference, believes that Florida and Alabama are the only southern states to have previously obtained federal training.

“Officials in Alabama tell me their 21 troopers with immigration and customs credentials have made arrests resulting in forty federal prosecutions,” Norris said. “Additionally, in just over two years, they seized over \$690,000 from cash smuggling operations. Tennessee deserves the same protection.”

Norris, reelected to a second term last year, represents Shelby, Tipton, Lauderdale and Dyer counties

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