

**MINUTES OF THE
IMMIGRATION INTERIM COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, October 8, 2008 – 4:30 p.m. – Sevier Valley Center, Snow College Richfield Campus

Members Present:

Sen. Scott K. Jenkins, Senate Chair
Rep. Brad L. Dee, House Chair
Sen. Mark B. Madsen
Sen. Ross I. Romero
Rep. Glenn A. Donnelson
Rep. Neil A. Hansen
Rep. Michael E. Noel
Rep. Mark A. Wheatley

Members Absent:

Sen. John W. Hickman
Rep. Stephen D. Clark
Rep. Ben C. Ferry

Staff Present:

Mr. Arthur L. Hunsaker, Policy Analyst
Mr. James L. Wilson, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Chelsea Barrett, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Dee called the meeting to order at 4:37 p.m.

Rep. Donnelson moved to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2008 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Dee explained to the audience and Committee members about the scheduling conflicts surrounding the cancellation of the St. George meeting, including the 2008 Second Special Session and St. George Marathon.

2. Immigration Perspectives: County Government

Mr. Denny Drake, Washington County Commissioner, noted his appreciation for state Legislators traveling to hear local immigration concerns. He noted his membership on a task force on immigration issues in Washington County. He explained the task force's two goals: 1) encouraging compliance with state laws; and 2) instigating a voluntary contractor program, which encourages businesses throughout Washington County to use the E-Verify system and sign a document to acknowledge their support and compliance.

Mr. Drake stated that he is aware that immigration needs to be addressed on the federal government level. He explained the importance of jobs through Intermountain Healthcare and the construction industry and noted that drug trafficking throughout the Washington County area has increased in recent years.

3. Law Enforcement

Mr. Kirk Smith, Washington County Sheriff, explained that legislation enacted in the 2008 General Session, SB 81 "Illegal Immigration" is a step in the right direction to address illegal immigration within the state. He stated that immigration solutions require cooperation between the local, state and federal governments. Mr. Smith explained the heavy tax burden on Washington County residents to hold illegal immigrants in custody. Mr. Smith spoke about his experiences working with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and how often financial support and resources are not available for small communities like Washington County.

Chair Dee asked about the possibility of local education for legal immigration practices and resources. Mr. Smith spoke in support of local education efforts.

4. Business Community

Ms. Lorraine Gregerson, Executive Director, Richfield Chamber of Commerce, explained to the Committee that she had polled fellow Chamber members about their concerns with immigration issues in Richfield. The chamber members noted that many small business owners rely on the cheap labor typically associated with the illegal immigrant population.

Mr. Clark Knight, President, Richfield Chamber of Commerce, spoke about his experiences involving small business owners and immigrant workers.

5. County Government

Mr. Gary Mason, Chair, Sevier County Commission, explained that in Sevier County there is a large population of people that are employed through agriculture, an industry that tends to attract illegal workers. Mr. Mason explained that it would be beneficial to educate citizens about the process for obtaining worker identification and legal status.

6. Law Enforcement

Mr. Phil Barney, Sevier County Sheriff, explained that in his profession he sees three main trends involving illegal immigration: 1) illegal identification fraud; 2) gang problems; and 3) the continuing and escalating problems involving immigration. Mr. Barney explained that in Richfield they receive minimal help from ICE agents because the majority of illegal immigration enforcement is conducted along the Wasatch Front and Washington County.

7. Public Comment

Ms. Phyllis Sears, citizen, Washington County, noted her participation at local levels to regulate, enforce laws, and educate citizens.

Mr. Robert Sears, citizen, Washington County, explained that small business owners should become familiar with the E-Verify system.

Mr. James Jorquez, citizen, Sevier County, noted that Utah is in the early stages of potentially major concerns with illegal immigration.

Mr. Jim Floor, citizen, St. George, noted that illegal immigration is the fastest growing crime in the country and explained that it will continue to grow unless more legislation is passed.

Mr. Gaylan Stewart, citizen, Spanish Fork, noted appreciation for the committee and its effort to travel around the state of Utah to hear input about illegal immigration.

Ms. Jerri Davis, St. Elizabeth Catholic Diocese, explained that immigration is about people and that border protection should be about humanitarian efforts and principles.

Mr. William Carlson, American Civil Union of Utah, noted that 2008 General Session SB 81, "Illegal Immigration," may cause national issues through its language. He encouraged the committee to look into illegal immigration policy that will not empower people to act incorrectly towards illegal immigrants.

8. Committee Business

Chair Dee noted that future immigration meetings are scheduled for Monday, October 22, Monday, November 17, and Wednesday, December 3 and explained that updated information will be posted on the Legislature's web page as soon as the information has been finalized

9. Adjourn

MOTION: Rep. Hansen moved to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Dee adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.