

States not reporting illegal immigrants

Confusion over new welfare rules cited

By Richard Wolf
USA TODAY

A provision of the new welfare reform law that requires states to report illegal aliens to federal authorities is being widely ignored.

Not one state has submitted the first quarterly reports due to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) this month, federal officials say.

The reasons vary. The law is unclear and clarifying regulations have not been issued. States also may not know who is a legal immigrant and who is illegal.

But some state officials may be ignoring the requirement altogether.

Opponents of the requirement say it may deter illegal aliens from seeking emergency care or benefits for children and other relatives who are citizens.

"That is a troubling possibility," says Christine Ferguson, director of Rhode Island's Department of Human Services. "It means you might not have children who are entitled to education getting education."

New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani filed suit in October against the provision, contending the INS would "terrorize people." He said it could stop the estimated 400,000 illegal immigrants in his city from reporting crimes or seeking necessary services.

The welfare reform law, which went into effect Oct. 1, requires state and county welfare agencies to file quarterly reports with the names and addresses of individuals they know are illegal aliens. The first deadline passed Jan. 1.

"As far as we're concerned, it's a requirement that was imposed on the states," says INS spokesman Bill Strassberger. But with limited resources and manpower, he says, the agency might not be able to act on tips from states.

Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, chairman of the House immigration subcommittee, intends "to see that those requirements are adhered to," says spokesman Allen Kay.

The delay doesn't surprise immigration opponents. "It's the same stonewalling that we have experienced consistently," says Barbara Coe, chairwoman of California Coalition for Immigration Reform.

But immigration lobbyist Cecilia Munoz of the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic civil rights group, says states just don't know how to comply.

"The confusion here is extraordi-

Steve W.
Do you know - or
could you find out -
what the story is here?
Thanks

Elena
cc: Bruce

Senators, auto execs blame regulators for 'lethal' air bag rules

By Jayne O'Donnell
USA TODAY

Amid reports that air bags may have killed five more people, U.S. senators and auto industry officials today will blame federal safety regulators for requiring air bags that are so forceful they can kill children and small adults.

"These bags are lethal: They're killing children, and they're killing women," says Sen. Dirk Kempthorne, R-Idaho. Kempthorne persuaded Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John McCain, R-Ariz., to hold the first of several hearings on air-bag deaths today.

McCain told USA TODAY he wants to give National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) officials a chance to "make their case."

Federal crash tests require air bags to deploy with enough force to protect adult males who aren't wearing seat belts. But the force of the bags has killed at least 32 children and 20 adults since 1991. Federal regulators are investigating whether another four children and one adult have been killed by bags. "It's an absolutely deplorable (government) standard that is causing this terrible tragedy to go on month after month," Kempthorne says. He wants NHTSA to let bags deploy less aggressively — with enough force to protect the 68% of motorists who wear seat belts.

Automakers are pushing their own plan to depower bags. Andrew Card, president of the American Automobile Manufacturers Association, says automakers could install depowered bags this year if NHTSA OK's that plan.

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