



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on June 21, 2011

Catholic Bishops Oppose E-Verify Effort to Ensure Immigrants are Legal

The “[Justice For Immigrants](#)” campaign of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [has taken](#) the [reconquista lobby's](#) position against a bill that would require all American employers to use the federal “[E-Verify](#)” program to validate the status of immigrants who apply for jobs.

E-Verify Ensures Immigrant Workers are Legal

As the law stands now, participating in the federal E-verify program is voluntary. [Senate bill 1196](#), introduced by Sen. [Charles Grassley](#) (R-Iowa) would make participation mandatory. Employers would have 12 months to begin compliance.



According to Grassley, the bill is simple common sense:

E-Verify has already proven effective in combating the hiring of illegal aliens. It's a simple tool for employers who want to comply with the law in a digital age when sophisticated, fraudulent documents are just the stroke of a computer key away. This legislation allows us to hold employers accountable while giving them the tools needed to abide by the law in their hiring practices.

The bill also requires that federal contractors and the government itself use [E-verify](#). It increases penalties for employers who duck the system and hire illegals.

As well, it:

- Reduces the liability that employers face if they participate in E-Verify when it involves the wrongful termination of an individual.
- Allows employers to use E-Verify before a person is hired, if the applicant consents.
- Requires employers to check the status of existing employees within 3 years.
- Requires employers to re-verify a person's status if their employment authorization is due to expire.
- Requires employers to terminate the employment of those found unauthorized to work due to a check through E-Verify.
- Helps ensure that the Social Security Administration catches multiple use of Social Security numbers by requiring them to develop algorithms to detect anomalies.
- Amends the criminal code to make clear that a defendant who possesses or otherwise uses identity information not his own without lawful authority and in the commission of another felony



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is still punishable for aggravated identity fraud, regardless of the defendant's "knowledge" of the victim.

- Establishes a demonstration project in a rural area or area without Internet capabilities to assist small businesses in complying with the participation requirement.
- Provides an offset to pay for any upgrades or expenses required by the legislation using unobligated funds from various departments.

The program began as a pilot in 1996 and has been thrice reauthorized since then. Nearly 300,000 employer use it, and [Grassley says](#), "Since the system was created, improvements have been made to significantly decrease error rates including an appeal process, a self check option for people to make sure their information is correct, and a photo-tool capability to improve the ability of employers to determine if the employee and the photo match."

Bishops Side with Illegal-alien Lobby

Understandably, the illegal-alien lobby opposes it. And the bishops stand with them.

Although the bishops don't emphasize the point, the JFI website [makes clear](#) that their ultimate goal in opposing Grassley's bill, like the [reconquista lobby's](#), is immediate amnesty for the 13 million illegal aliens already in the country. Although the website denies that the bishops support "amnesty," the JFI release on opposing the E-Verify program says otherwise. It suggests that strengthening E-Verify cannot work, and therefore the bill must not be passed without an amnesty.

Enforcement-only immigration policies are not working. In the past decade, Congress has spent \$117 billion of taxpayer dollars on immigration enforcement initiatives, yet the number of unauthorized immigrants in the country has grown to 11.2 million and the demand for foreign-born, low-skilled labor has continued on pace with the ebbs and flows of the U.S. economy. Approximately 8 million — or 70 percent — of the unauthorized population are in the U.S. labor force and each year another 300,000 to 400,000 enter the country. It is clear that another approach is necessary.

The problem is that unless E-Verify's expansion is undertaken in the context of comprehensive immigration reform, it will hurt U.S. workers and our already weakened economy. *Unless Congress legalizes unauthorized immigrants*, mandatory E-Verify will begin with a handicap of 8 million unauthorized workers who will be driven further into the underground economy, hurting both the U.S. economy and workers by decreasing federal tax revenue by more than \$17.3 billion over ten years, creating an unequal workplace, and lowering labor standards for all workers. [Emphasis added.]

And, because of well-documented flaws in the Government databases upon which it relies, E-Verify does not detect over half of the undocumented workers entered in the system, yet results in false positives for hundreds of thousands of American workers.

The JFI website [also provides](#) ready-made letters that backers [can send](#) to Congressmen, Senators, and the President.

The upshot is, the perfect is the enemy of the good. Because [Grassley's bill](#) might not perfect e-verification, the bill does not deserve support.

While the bishops aver that illegals will provide about \$17.3 billion in federal tax revenues in the next decade, they do not explain that illegals will cost Americans some \$286 billion — \$28.6 billion annually



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— in federal expenditures during the same time, as the [Federation for American Immigration Reform](#) has shown.

And [JFI's figures](#) are incorrect. [According to](#) FAIR, illegals contribute \$1.6 billion annually in federal income tax revenues. But what illegals receive in the earned-income and child tax credits total \$3.9 billion. Taxpayers eat a net loss of about \$2.3 billion. As for all receipts, such as Social Security and Medicare, illegals contribute some \$9.5 billion to the federal treasury, which means their annual net cost is \$19.1 billion.

FAIR reckons that about 13 million illegals live in the United States. If every illegal alien were deported tomorrow, the taxpayers would save \$191 billion during the next decade in federal outlays alone. Using FAIR's figure for state expenditures on border jumpers, deporting them all would save \$830 billion during the next decade.

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