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## **Business Forum: E-Verify helps in dealing with immigration issues**

*Saturday, September 10, 2011*

**By Robert S. Whitehill**

Some immigration hawks advocate deporting all of the estimated 12 million undocumented aliens in the country. If Department of Justice calculations are accurate, the cost could approach an eye-opening \$30.7 billion, with removal from the United States costing the government \$25,553 per person. That approach to immigration enforcement is neither subtle nor sensible.

E-Verify, a program on the books for 15 years, is one way the government verifies employment authorization of newly hired workers. Once an obscure immigration offering, the program increasingly is being deployed as an internal enforcement weapon in the arsenal against unauthorized workers.

Allegheny County recently passed an ordinance mandating contractors participate in E-Verify to ensure their workers are authorized to be employed in the country. It applies to companies providing the county with services, working on public buildings or receiving a county subsidy of \$100,000 or more.

Critics say E-Verify leads to racial profiling and is inaccurate, time-consuming and expensive. To its credit, the U.S. government is trying to improve the program to address these issues and make it more user-friendly. Recently, a Spanish-language version was opened, a self-check online service enabling workers to confirm employment eligibility status ([www.uscis.gov/selfcheck](http://www.uscis.gov/selfcheck)).

E-Verify is an add-on to the required completion of an I-9 employment verification form. The complexity of the law makes the I-9 challenging to complete and maintain for each new employee. Even well-intentioned businesses voluntarily using E-Verify still face potential fines for failure to accurately comply with I-9.

E-Verify is the tip of the enforcement iceberg, but it is more sensible than some of the state and U.S. enforcement that has caused many immigrants to live in fear.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in California recently boarded southbound buses at the Mexico border and asked passengers to document their status. If suspected of having been here illegally, passengers were arrested and then deported. These are people voluntarily seeking to leave the country. This is an example of an enforcement technique that may be considered bizarre.

Rational and humane reform is needed. Indeed, the government recently took a step in this direction by prioritizing deportation of criminal aliens rather than others such as minor children.

To quote DOJ's Immigration Litigation Bulletin, it is "both fair and appropriate to consider the costs and cost-effectiveness of how we choose to regulate immigration and the processes and procedures we adopt."

E-Verify is a small price to pay, considering the alternatives.

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