

CHUCK GRASSLEY

PRESS RELEASE

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Grassley Wins Common Sense Amendment to Immigration Bill

Washington, D.C. -- Working to allow states and local governments to help enforce immigration laws, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) today won unanimous approval by the Judiciary Committee for a "common sense" amendment to the immigration reform bill.

Grassley said his amendment would accomplish a goal he set last summer to empower local police to take action against illegal immigration in their own communities. Specifically, the Grassley proposal would establish a discretionary program through which the U.S. Attorney General could enter into a formal agreement with any state or local community and authorize local law enforcement to assist the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

"The fact is that merely being an illegal alien in the United States is not a crime. It's only a civil violation. And local law enforcement officials have their hands tied when it comes to arresting and detaining illegal aliens," Grassley said. "My amendment is a practical solution to a very real problem. We have thousands of state and local police ready and willing to help the INS protect our communities. This amendment responds to that opportunity in a responsible and cost-effective way."

According to the INS, there are an estimated 100 plus, convicted deportable aliens on probation in Iowa that federal agents have been unable to locate and arrest because of the lack of resources.

"Without a doubt, the INS must continue to have primary responsibility for enforcing immigration laws," Grassley said. "But even after Congress authorized another \$100 million last year for the INS budget, the agency continues to express a need for additional resources to crack down on illegal immigration. Common sense dictates that we make use of our police forces already on-the-ground." Grassley said the Iowa Department of Public Safety supported his effort, as did local police chiefs in Iowa.

Earlier this month, the INS announced that it would open a permanent four-person office in Cedar Rapids, and that an unspecified number of staff from the existing INS office in Omaha would be dispatched to provide periodic INS casework services in Des Moines. Grassley had petitioned for such a presence since mid-1995.

Grassley serves as the ranking majority member of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and as a senior member of the Judiciary Committee. The "Immigration Reform Act of 1995" under consideration by the Judiciary Committee is sponsored by Sen. Alan K. Simpson (R-WY).