

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

February 27, 2008

Ms. Julie Myers  
Assistant Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
425 I Street, NW, Room 7030  
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Ms. Myers:

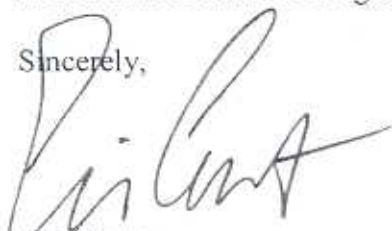
On behalf of the Alien Criminal Enforcement (ACE) task force - an assembly of government officials and law enforcement representatives in Eastern Virginia who have been appointed by Representatives Drake, Wittman, and myself - we would like to register our concerns about a problem that is hampering our local law enforcement's ability to identify illegal immigrants in county and state jails. When a U.S. citizen, permanent legal resident (PLR) or an illegal alien arrives in jail, authorities process their information through the NCIC database to see if the suspect has a criminal history. But, much to the dismay of law enforcement, that database lacks the immigration status encased in the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) database. The result is a complicated and bureaucratic process of determining legality that enhances the likelihood that criminal illegal aliens will evade deportation following their incarceration.

Congress should do everything in its power to tackle this barrier. Possibilities include giving law enforcement officials access to the ICE database; syncing up the ICE database with the NCIC database or finding a real-time mechanism that immediately alerts ICE that an illegal immigrant who has been arrested for a crime is being detained in a local jail.

The current database restrictions force law enforcement officials to ask inmates whether they are legal or not. That should not be happening. We hope that in the near future all inmates - illegal alien, PLR or U.S. citizen - will be fingerprinted and put through a database that determines both past criminal activity and legality.

Our communities understandably are outraged that criminal illegal aliens are returning to our streets and neighborhoods after being detained to commit further crimes. We would appreciate your looking into this matter and providing us insight as to how we might be able to remedy this breakdown in communication among federal, state and local law enforcement. We also invite you to address the next meeting of our ACE task force to further discuss this important issue.

Sincerely,



Eric Cantor  
Member of Congress  
VA-07



Thelma Drake  
Member of Congress  
VA-02



Rob Wittman  
Member of Congress  
VA-01