



For the most part, the new state measures are designed to get tough on illegal immigrants, on employers who give them jobs and on state officials who give them benefits. In some states, illegal immigrants can buy lottery tickets but cannot collect if they win a significant prize.

At the same time, though, some states are moving in the other direction -- making life easier for immigrants, legal or otherwise. In April, Nebraska's legislature overrode a gubernatorial veto to offer in-state college tuition rates to the children of illegal immigrants. Nine other states have formally authorized tuition breaks for undocumented immigrants, and many public universities employ a "don't ask, don't tell" policy for graduates of high schools in the states.

Maryland and Virginia lawmakers considered proposals to crack down on illegal immigrants in their recently concluded legislative sessions, but none passed.

The multistate approach, with some states at variance with others, threatens to create a maze of laws and regulations at a time when the nation as a whole is struggling with how to contend with an unprecedented wave of illegal immigration.

"We're not going to solve this problem with a patchwork approach at the state level. It's a national problem, and the need is to repair the national system," said Josh Bernstein of the National Immigration Law Center, which works to promote the rights of low-income immigrants. "We're not going to erect barriers between states."

#### Graphic

##### 43 States Considering Legislation

This year, 463 bills dealing with illegal immigrants were introduced in 43 states, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Following are the states that are considering legislation on three of the main issues.

#### The Immigration Debate



Immigration reform proposals before Congress have sparked a nationwide political debate.

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Advocates on both sides said that Monday's economic boycott and rallies will work to their advantage. Opponents of illegal immigration said the protests hardened their resolve, while immigrants' rights activists predicted that the large turnout will sway lawmakers to their side.

The National Conference of State Legislatures has tallied 463 bills introduced this year in 43 states, by far the biggest crop of state immigration proposals ever recorded. Ann Morse, who tracks the issue for the NCSL, said this rush of legislation demonstrates that state legislators are no longer willing to cede this high-profile political concern to Congress.

Morse cited three reasons for the unprecedented interest in immigration at the state level. "First, there's the reaction to 9/11 and the concern that our borders are not safe," she said. "Another factor is the number of immigrants and a general sense that the influx is growing rapidly. And finally, we seem to have a Congress in gridlock on the issue. State legislators feel if they don't act, nobody will."

That last concern has been crucial in the legislature here, noted state Rep. Russell K. Pearce, a Republican who says he is "fed up" with his own party's management of the issue in Washington.

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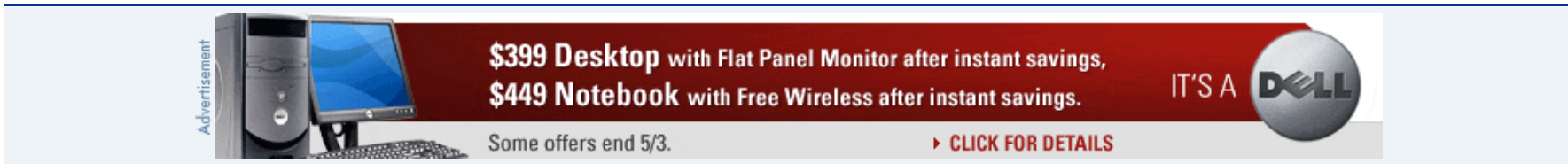
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