

U.S. Sues Ill. Over Immigration Law

By RYAN KEITH

Associated Press Writer **Sep 25, 9:07 AM EDT**

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) -- The Bush administration is suing Illinois over a new state law it says complicates federal efforts to crack down on illegal immigration.

The Illinois law would prevent employers from participating in a federal program that verifies whether workers are legally authorized to work in the United States until a federal database is more accurate.

The U.S. attorney's office for central Illinois filed the lawsuit Monday, asking a federal judge to block implementation of the law.

The voluntary federal program, created by Congress in the mid-1990s, helps companies verify employees' identity and employment eligibility in an effort to reduce the hiring of illegal immigrants.

The new Illinois law, approved by state lawmakers and signed into law by Gov. Rod Blagojevich last month, bars companies from participating in the program unless they get notice of workers' ineligibility within three days in 99 percent of cases. It is to go into effect Jan. 1.

The lawsuit contends the 750 Illinois employers participating in the program would essentially be excluded because of the stricter notification requirement. The government now advises employers of eligibility within a day in about 93 percent of cases, the lawsuit states.

The Illinois law "frustrates our ability to assist employers in making sure their work force is legal," said Carl Nichols, a deputy assistant U.S. attorney general.

A spokesman for Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan said the office was still reviewing the federal complaint.