

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Helen Langan

801-641-6569

Statement from Mayor Ralph Becker

I am concerned that news coverage this morning regarding the impact of state immigration legislation may cause alarm in our immigrant communities and I want to clarify both the effect of the legislation and Salt Lake City's position. The legislation (S.B. 81) was passed by the 2008 Legislature but does not go into effect until July 1, 2009.

The law requires state and local agencies to confirm the legal residency of anyone seeking public benefits. Public employers must confirm the legal residency of any new employees, and private contractors doing business with a public employer must also use a Status Verification System with all their workers. These provisions merely comply with federal requirements.

The aspect of the law that was the subject of controversy this morning is the requirement that the Utah State Attorney General must negotiate with the U.S. Department of Justice or Department of Homeland Security for the enforcement of federal immigration and customs laws within the state by state and local law enforcement personnel.

I have been personally assured that the Attorney General will not negotiate an MOU that will require Salt Lake City or other jurisdictions to enforce immigration law. The MOU may provide such authority but it will not be a mandate and Salt Lake City police officers will not be cross deputized. Salt Lake City police officers will not begin to enforce immigration law.

United States Attorney for Utah, Brett Tolman, has also offered the opinion that due to recent court cases, illegal immigrants cannot be prosecuted in Utah or other non-border states merely for their presence in the state unless they have committed a crime.

My Administration has worked hard to create a relationship of trust and cooperation in our immigrant community and an environment in which both victims and witnesses of crime are willing to come forward to assist our Police Department in resolving criminal cases. Police cannot deter or solve crime if victims and witnesses are afraid to cooperate with the police because they might be deported.

I want to assure everyone concerned that this legislation does not require a change in our policy and that all our residents can continue to feel safe in cooperating with the Salt Lake City Police Department to solve any crime in which they are a victim or a witness or in which they can provide valuable information.

My office spoke with Representative Noel today and expressed our opposition to cross deputization of Salt Lake City police officers. Representative Noel assures me that his intent is not to mandate Salt Lake City police officers enforce federal immigration law. Representative Noel also reassured me that he does not intend to seek retribution against Salt Lake City for declining to deputize our law enforcement officials to enforce federal immigration law. I look forward to a continuing dialogue with Representative Noel and his colleagues in the legislature as I advocate for the interests of Salt Lake City's immigrant residents.

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