

NEWS

From the Office of

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 11, 2009



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Jail Screening Program for Illegal Immigrants Recognized

Almost One in Five Deported Illegal Aliens Are Referred from Remote Video Interviews

SAN BERNARDINO – First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt today accepted an award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for his leadership in expanding a program to identify illegal aliens in the County’s jails. The award was presented to Supervisor Mitzelfelt by Board of Supervisors Chairman Gary Ovitt at today’s regular Board meeting, during which 16 NACo awards were distributed to 12 County departments.

“I’m honored to receive this award. We are expected to make the most efficient use of the taxpayers’ dollars and this program greatly improves public safety at minimal cost,” said Supervisor Mitzelfelt. “I would also like to thank the staff in the Sheriff’s department who do a great job every day of identifying criminal suspects who are in the country illegally.”

In 2005 the Sheriff’s Department entered into an agreement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to provide training for designated Sheriff’s staff to perform certain immigration enforcement functions, including screening inmates to determine if they are in the country illegally. The trained staff had been located only at West Valley Detention Center in Rancho Cucamonga.

NACo selected Supervisor Mitzelfelt to receive a 2009 NACo Achievement Award for allocating \$100,000 last year to create a Remote Video Immigration Screening program, which expanded the County’s existing program from one jail to five jails using video conferencing equipment and existing staff. Screening can now be done remotely at jails in Victorville, Barstow, Morongo Valley and San Bernardino.

From January through July, the program has referred 2,057 suspects to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for deportation once their criminal cases are concluded. About 350 of those were identified through the remote screening program.

Approximately 4,000 criminal illegal aliens pass through the County’s jail system every year at an estimated cost of \$24 million.

The NACo Achievement Awards Program recognizes counties for improving the services they deliver to the public. The awards focus on innovation and the use of technology.