

NEWS

From the Office of

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Mitzelfelt Earns National Award for Immigration Screening Program

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Counties (NACo) today notified San Bernardino County Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt that he has been selected to receive a 2009 NACo Achievement Award in recognition of his creation of a program to identify illegal aliens in the County's jails. Mitzelfelt allocated \$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.

"Our immigration screening program has been very successful in identifying illegal immigrants in our jails and through this use of technology we're now able to identify even more inmates for deportation," said Supervisor Mitzelfelt. "In addition, the technology saves us hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in staffing costs because we are able to use existing trained staff to screen inmates throughout the County."

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.

In 2005 the Sheriff's Department entered into an agreement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) 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. Criminal illegal aliens are then referred to ICE for deportation.

"Quick identification of illegal immigrants in our jails provides several benefits," added Mitzelfelt. "Our program helps prevent their release back into the community, reduces recidivism, frees up jail bed space and potentially helps us to increase reimbursements from the federal government for incarceration costs."

San Bernardino County experiences a significant amount of crime committed by illegal aliens, with more than 4,000 illegal aliens incarcerated in the County jail system last year. County costs for managing the issue of criminal illegal aliens average \$24 million per year.

NACo Executive Director Larry Naake congratulated Mitzelfelt, saying, "NACo is proud to confer this award and recognize your county's hard work to promote quality, efficient, and responsive management and administration."