

# ***FLAPOL***

## **Ron DeSantis wants E-Verify bill in 2020 for ‘public safety’**

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Gov. **Ron DeSantis** asked the Legislature Monday to send him a bill this coming Session to require employers make E-Verify checks, saying it would make Florida communities safer.

Republicans Sen. **Joe Gruters** and Rep. **Cord Byrd** joined DeSantis in The Villages for the announcement. Gruters, chair of the Florida GOP, is co-sponsoring Sen. **Tom Lee**’s **E-Verify requirement bill (SB 664)** while Byrd intends to file a House counterpart.

“The reason this is so timely is twofold — It’s about fairness for lawful immigrants and native-born workers, and it’s about public safety,” DeSantis said.

E-Verify, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security program, allows employers to confirm that potential hires are eligible to work in the U.S. SB 664 would require all employers to start using the E-Verify system by Jan. 1, 2021 or risk losing their licenses.

“I trust the Legislature will act swiftly in the 2020 Legislative Session and pass an E-Verify requirement for employers in this state to protect Florida workers, preserve the rule of law, and make our communities safer,” DeSantis said.

Byrd and Gruters backed the call by DeSantis.

“E-Verify is an immigration enforcement tool that protects the wages of citizens and lawful immigrants and will discourage the use of illegal labor in Florida,” Byrd said. “I’m proud to stand with (Gov.) DeSantis in his promise to promote the rule of law and put Americans first.”

This year, Gruters and Byrd spearheaded sanctuary cities legislation — one of the Session’s contentious battlegrounds — through the Legislature. Gruters, of Sarasota, indicated that E-Verify is the next step for Florida to combat illegal immigration.

“Governor Ron DeSantis’ leadership is why we now have the strongest ban of sanctuary cities in the country,” Gruters said. “We are now going to work together again to deliver for Florida workers.

SB 664, filed late last month, is still awaiting its first committee hearing. Lawmakers will convene next month once more before the 2020 Session begins.

“E-Verify provides a fast, free, and effective way for an employer to verify that new hires are authorized to work in the U.S. using the same documents as required by the preexisting I-9

process,” Gruters said. “This will protect Florida workers against unfair job competition and wage depression.”

Past efforts to require E-Verify have failed following pushback from agriculture, tourism and construction interests. After Lee’s bill was filed, IMPAC Fund and ABIC issued a statement calling the proposal “economically harmful and morally wrong.”

“E-Verify will hurt Florida’s economic growth and industries already struggling to find workers,” the groups said. “E-Verify has a 12 percent error rate and could jeopardize the jobs of 1.1 million U.S. citizens and lawfully present Floridians and cost Florida employers \$4.7 billion to replace lawfully present workers that receive false disqualification, according to CATO Institute, a conservative think tank.”