

## Homeland Security chief Janet Napolitano says U.S. faces an eventful fall

*Security chief tells judges what to expect*

By JULIA REYNOLDS  
Herald Staff Writer  
July 21, 2009

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano warned federal judges and court officials Monday of the urgency of national immigration reform, "an increasing cascade" of cyber-terrorism attacks and a renewed flu pandemic that could severely strain government institutions this fall.

Napolitano made her remarks at the opening of the Ninth Circuit Judicial Conference, an annual gathering of federal judges and court officials from the Western U.S., held this week at the Hyatt Regency in Monterey.

Immigration reform topped her list of pressing issues, the former Arizona governor said, "because for the last 16 years, I've seen how flaws in our underlying legislation ... need to be corrected."

Napolitano has been a longtime proponent of emphasizing enforcement of immigration laws in the workplace.

"The demand for cheap labor is such a primary driver of illegal immigration into our country," she said.

She urged new thinking on "what immigration means and how it should work. And that includes, by the way, not just picking up people at the border. It means all the way through the system, including through the legal and the judicial system so heavily impacted by immigration."

Last month, Napolitano met with 30 lawmakers who were "given the charge" by President Barack Obama to push for a comprehensive immigration bill he hopes will be passed by late this year or in early 2010.

She plans to be involved in drafting the bill during this summer's congressional recess, she said, encouraging the Ninth Circuit Court officials to weigh in to her or their congressional representatives before an open hearing process begins this fall, most likely in the Senate.

Napolitano, who took the helm of the Department of Homeland Security in January, said the three issues of immigration, cyber crime and the H1N1 virus were "very acute in terms of timing."

Attacks on computer systems are on the rise, she said, posing a threat to institutions such as the courts that constantly deal with confidential files.

"In my few months as the secretary of Homeland Security, I've seen an increasing cascade of attacks on systems in the United States. I've seen attacks into our own department," she said.

Government agencies and the courts must develop "the institutional capacity to detect these things, repair them and keep on operating in this new cyber world," she said.

Finally, a possible return of new forms of the flu virus to the U.S. this fall could mean widespread absenteeism that affects government, businesses and schools.

"We all need to be thinking through, how do we keep things going, how do we keep business happening with absentee rates that could be 10, 20 or 30 percent — maybe even 40 percent — at the height of the return of a flu pandemic? How will you operate the courts?"

While the next outbreaks are unlikely to reach levels of the devastating 1918 flu pandemic, she said, the H1N1 virus could force school and business closures across the country. The virus is circulating through the Southern Hemisphere, she said, and is expected to make a strong comeback in the U.S. by early fall.

"We don't have a lot of time," she said. "I would urge you to lean forward and navigate this issue ahead of time so that decisions are not being made in the height of a pandemic."

Napolitano told the judges she is "squeezing out" wasteful spending from her department's \$50 billion budget, all the way down to the cost of redesigning logos. That task alone cost some taxpayers \$3 million, she said, as the department consolidated 22 separate federal agencies when it formed in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks.

"We will no longer fund new logo designs in the Department of Homeland Security. You heard it here first," she said, drawing laughter from her audience. "I think our logo is just fine, thank you very much."

Julia Reynolds can be reached at 648-1187 or [jreynolds@montereyherald.com](mailto:jreynolds@montereyherald.com).