

It must be election time Immigration • Illogical copycat laws like Arizona's would cost Missouri and other states dearly. OTHER VIEWS

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Body

People across the country have been speaking out over the past several weeks, voicing concern and opposition to the new Arizona **immigration law**. In St. Louis 2,500 people, including St. Louisans and United Methodist Women from all across the country in town for their quadrennial assembly, gathered May 1 at Kiener Plaza to say "No" to Arizona.

At last report, some nine national groups had cancelled their plans to hold their conventions in Arizona. And now the Los Angeles Dodgers reportedly are looking for a new home for spring training so they don't have to return to Arizona next year. Even the Republicans don't want to spend **time** in Arizona, having chosen Tampa, Fla., over Phoenix for the 2012 Republican Convention.

The **states** that border Arizona also are speaking out against Arizona-style legislation. New Mexico's governor says it is a step backwards. Texas isn't touching it. And **elected** officials at every level in California are calling for a boycott while lawsuits from around the country are ramping up. **Arizona's** new **law** is poised to **cost** the **state** in a big way.

But in St. Charles, in a **state** where the total number of foreign-born individuals statewide is less than 4 percent, the County Council last week passed a non-binding resolution to "encourage" the **Missouri** Legislature to pass an Arizona clone. It **must be election time!**

Now, in all fairness, the County Council was probably just voting on a resolution in support of one of their own. Republican **State** Rep. Mark Parkinson, who represents parts of St. Charles County, introduced a bill in this legislative session that he said dealt with human trafficking. In reality, the bill would not have done anything to prevent trafficking or help victims of the crime often known as "modern day slavery."

In fact, it completely ignored strong anti-trafficking provisions already present in federal **law** and **Missouri** statute. It also included such ridiculous provisions as making it a crime for a person without legal status to transport him or herself.

Common sense prevailed in the International Trade and **Immigration** Committee this year and the bill died with the adjournment of the **Missouri** Legislature last Friday. However, Rep. Parkinson had an Arizona-type substitute waiting in the wings, which we are sure to see introduced next year.

So during the legislative "off season," here are a few things for **Missouri** to consider before rubber stamping **Arizona's** policy in the Show-Me **State**. **Laws like** those Rep. Parkinson suggests will **cost** our cash-strapped **state dearly**. Those great small businesses started by immigrants and refugees? Major companies that want to hire

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U.S. and immigrant workers who are looking for a place to locate their next office? Forget it, those businesses and jobs won't be here because immigrants won't want to bring their families here to live and work.

Meanwhile, like Arizona, Missouri will have to use taxpayer dollars to defend its unconstitutional law in court, and our state and local governments will be stuck using their precious resources to do the federal government's job. These are steep prices for a state with falling revenues that is having trouble balancing its budget.

Instead, we need sensible, humane immigration reform, not a patchwork of municipal, county and state laws that can lead to racial profiling and other discrimination. Such laws decrease cooperation between local law enforcement and immigrant communities, which costs states an arm and a leg, not only in dollars and jobs but also in quality of life for residents.

Simply put, an Arizona law in Missouri would cost too much.

Joan Suarez and Jennifer Rafanan are Missouri-based immigrant and refugee advocates.

Graphic

Christian Gooden • cgooden@post-dispatch.com A protester at a May 1 rally at Kiener Plaza holds a sign showing what she thinks about Arizona's new immigration law. The law requires police to check the immigration status of any person "reasonably suspected" to be in the United States illegally. Opponents say the law amounts to racial profiling.

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