

Local rallies to denounce Ariz. immigration law

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Body

Immigration-reform advocates are beginning a weekend of **rallies** and prayer vigils calling on Congress to pass comprehensive changes during this session, and **denouncing Arizona's** new **immigration**-control **law** as an invitation to racial profiling.

Nationwide, 70 demonstrations are planned, as well as Sunday church services to mark what organizers are calling the Interfaith Immigrant Sabbath.

In this region on Saturday, protesters will gather at a park in Southwest Philadelphia, on a soccer field in Kennett Square, and at St. Joseph Pro-Cathedral in Camden to urge elected officials to "respect the dignity of immigrant families."

Speakers ranging from **local** labor leaders to Camden Roman Catholic Bishop Joseph A. Galante plan to praise immigrant contributions to the workforce and to family life. Some could call for a boycott of **Arizona's** tourist industry to force a repeal of the **law** signed last week.

The **law** requires police to verify the **immigration** status of anyone they have a lawful reason to stop, whether on foot or in a vehicle. Proponents say it was crafted in response to the large number of illegal immigrants in **Arizona** and chronic lawlessness on its border with Mexico. Absent federal regulation, supporters say, **Arizona** had no choice but to act.

The **law's** critics warn that anyone with a dark complexion or foreign accent could be subject to harassment.

Both sides seem to agree the **law** was born of frustration.

"For the past two weeks, we have all been transfixed on **Arizona** as an example of what happens when the federal government fails to lead," said Ali Kronley, Pennsylvania director of Reform **Immigration** for America, the national pro-immigrant group that is sponsoring the weekend **rallies**.

The Southwest Philadelphia **rally** at Elmwood Park, 71st Street and Buist Avenue, begins at noon. The Kennett Square **rally**, on Anson Nixon Park soccer fields, starts at 3 p.m. and will be followed by a march into downtown Kennett Square. The prayer **rally** at St. Joseph's, 2907 Federal St., Camden, begins at 4 p.m.

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