

Gwinnett Opinions: Snell: Concerns linked to employee privacy rights

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Byline: THE OWNERS OF E.R. **SNELL** CONTRACTOR INC.

For the Journal-Constitution

Body

In reference to the recent publicity that E. R. **Snell** Contractor Inc. received about the **Gwinnett** County Immigration Ordinance, the following is our response:

The ramifications of the illegal-worker issue in **Gwinnett** County and elsewhere are complex and emotional, and our company agrees that no employer should knowingly employ an illegal worker after having undertaken reasonable verification steps.

We follow and abide by all state and federal laws in hiring and screening our **employees**. All of our **employees** pay the required federal and state employment taxes. All our **employees** have access to our medical, dental, disability, and life insurance plans.

The state of Georgia's new immigration policy, Senate Bill 529, went into effect on July 1. E. R. **Snell** voluntarily began implementation of the plan in February of this year --- five months before the state-required date.

We do not discriminate in our hiring or the compensation of our **employees**. As a contractor that performs both federal and state work, we have been audited by both federal and state agencies and understand that we are subject to future audits.

We applaud **Gwinnett** County and the state of Georgia's attempts to alleviate the undocumented immigrant worker issue. We, as most Americans, feel strongly that our borders need to be secured and protected.

Our issue with the ordinance was not about its intent but with the potential legal ramifications of the verification process that the ordinance required. We feel, as a Christian-based, family-owned company, that our first responsibility is to our **employees** and their **privacy rights**. We needed time to receive some assurance from our legal counsel and clarification from **Gwinnett** County that those **rights** were not being infringed upon by this ordinance.

We have a long and well-respected relationship with **Gwinnett** County and hope it continues. We have now received that clarification and plan to go forward bidding on **Gwinnett** County contracts.

We hope this letter will explain our position on this very volatile and misunderstood issue.

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THE OWNERS OF E.R. **SNELL** CONTRACTOR INC.

Snellville

Graphic

Photo: KIMBERLY SMITH / StaffE.R. **Snell** is building a new railroad overpass at Buford Highway and Pleasant Hill Road./ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: KIMBERLY SMITH / Staff"ERS" on the orange construction barrel stands for E.R. **Snell**, one of the state's most prominent roadbuilders./ImageData*

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