

Northside Opinions: ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION: Citizens have had enough; Feds have failed miserably, so Georgia must act to address problem

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Body

Nearly nine in every 10 Americans say, in recent national polls, that **illegal immigration** is a serious **problem**. It's estimated that, last year, more people entered our nation illegally than legally. That's disturbing when one considers that the United States already allows more people to legally immigrate into our nation than do all other nations of the world combined.

Simply put, the **federal** government has **failed miserably**, and **citizens** have had **enough**.

State after state is looking for ways to discourage **illegal immigration** and to comply with **federal** law. The situation is so dire in Arizona and New Mexico that the Democratic governors there declared official states of emergency to deal with the crisis.

Nationwide in 2005, there were roughly 50 state legislative proposals to **address illegal immigration**. This year there are about 500 such proposals. States and **citizens** are no longer waiting on the **feds** to enforce the law.

Here in **Georgia**, I have authored Senate Bill 529, the **Georgia** Security and **Immigration** Compliance **Act**. If enacted, SB 529 would be the most comprehensive state **illegal immigration** law in America.

The legislation **addresses** almost every major **problem** arising from **illegal immigration**: public safety, public employment, public contracts, public benefits and private employers.

* Public safety: SB 529 requires that every person booked into jail on a felony charge be verified for legal status. Persons who cannot prove legal status will be checked against a **federal** database to determine whether they are wanted elsewhere for a felony or a standing deportation order. SB 529 will also put into place the nation's toughest laws against the horrific practice of human trafficking.

* Public employment: SB 529 requires that every government in **Georgia** use the free **federal** Basic Pilot program, which immediately and electronically verifies the legal status of newly hired employees. Surely we should expect government to follow the **federal** law as it pertains to hiring.

* Public contracts: We will also require that all companies working on public contracts use the Basic Pilot program. Again, taxpayers should expect that their money will be used to hire only legal labor.

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* Public benefits: Every year, Georgia denies thousands of legal residents benefits that the state cannot afford. The question is not whether we deny taxpayer benefits, but rather who qualifies for these limited taxpayer benefits. SB 529 will require that every person who applies for benefits prove their eligibility.

* Private employers: Under SB 529, if a business knowingly hires an illegal alien, the compensation paid to that person cannot be declared as a legitimate business expense. A business should not receive a tax break for breaking the law.

Ultimately, this legislation is about equal application of the law. No illegal employer should profit at the expense of law-abiding competition. No Georgia resident should be denied benefits because those benefits are given to someone who is ineligible to receive them. No taxpayer dollars should be used to support violating hiring laws.

SB 529 is a comprehensive and reasonable first step in addressing Georgia's problem of illegal immigration.

State Sen. Chip Rogers, a Republican, lives in Cherokee County and represents parts of the Northside.

Graphic

Photo: JESSICA McGOWAN / SpecialSenate Bill 529 would end tax deductions for employers who hire illegal workers, such as these.

Photo: Sen. Chip Rogers

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