

Arizona leaders worry as state's image takes beating; IMMIGRATION LAW AT ISSUE Bitter debate dismays both sides of the aisle

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Body

When state Rep. Kyrsten Sinema (D) travels outside Arizona, she hears the same question over and over: "What's wrong with your state?" She notes Arizona's new immigration law, its ban on ethnic studies classes and its prohibition on creating animal-human hybrids.

The other day, Sinema sent a note to her Twitter followers that might as well have been accompanied by a heavy sigh. "Just one day," she tweeted, "I'd like Arizona to be in the news for something good."

Sinema is a Democrat in a largely Republican state, but her sense of disheartenment is shared across party lines. Dean Martin, state treasurer and GOP candidate for governor, said national opinion on Arizona is "polarized. That's counterproductive."

Arizona finds itself at the vortex of an immigration debate that is increasingly bitter and, figures on both sides say, increasingly unwinnable. Opinions are split, with fear of harassment rising among Hispanics and worry about an economic boycott growing among the state's leaders.

Gov. Jan Brewer (R) has appointed a committee and allocated \$250,000 to re-brand the state's image, while 13 Arizona chamber of commerce executives appealed to Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig to keep the 2011 All-Star Game in Phoenix after he faced pressure to change locations. They said it would preserve jobs for "innocent citizens, including our Hispanic community."

Musical performers such as Sonic Youth, Kanye West and Rage Against the Machine have said they will boycott the state. Phoenix City Hall calculates that Arizona has lost nearly \$100 million in convention commitments. Meanwhile, supporters and opponents of the immigration law are taking to the streets weekly.

The national focus on the state has grown since April 23, when Brewer, facing a primary election challenge, signed the bill known as SB1070, giving police wide latitude to check the immigration status of people they suspect are in the country illegally. The governor met last week with President Obama at the White House, pressing her point that federal inaction forced Arizona to act.

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"**Both sides** are definitely set in their positions. Probably no one's going to change anyone's mind," said Grant Woods (R), a former state attorney general, who **worries** that an **image** of the state as intolerant will **take** hold. "I think it sticks until we rise above it."

In **Arizona** and beyond, the **law** has many supporters. A CBS News poll last month found that 52 percent of respondents nationally think the **Arizona law** is "about right" in its handling of illegal immigrants. Seventeen percent said it does not go far enough. Twenty-eight percent said the **law** goes too far.

Although the **law** is not due to **take** effect until July 29, Hispanic families that include undocumented immigrants are lying low. Some are planning moves to other states, said the Rev. Vili Valderrama, who lives in Nogales, near the border with Mexico. "People feel discouraged, they feel powerless," he said.

Natividad Lopez Rubio, known as "Natty," said his Nogales-to-Phoenix shuttle business is suffering. A few months ago, his minivans made 14 round trips a day and were often full. Now, he is lucky to make five trips with a few passengers in each.

"Most of the people we carry are Mexican. People are scared," Lopez Rubio said outside his office, one block from the busy border crossing. "It's totally a consequence of the **law**."

In lamenting the **state's** increasingly **bitter** divisions, Laura Briggs, who teaches women's studies at the University of **Arizona**, cites a painful example of ethnic strife. "It feels like what people said about Sarajevo," said Briggs, whose daughter is Mexican American. "I used to be part of a community that was mixed. People lived in the same neighborhood, people intermarried. Now there's this unleashing of this horrible anti-Latino racism that I can't even understand."

Opponents of the **immigration law** may be frustrated, but "boycotts are absolutely the wrong way to go," said Garrick Taylor, a spokesman for the state chamber of commerce. Boycotts hurt Arizonans, "particularly in the tourist industry, who had nothing to do with the **law**."

Taylor is especially annoyed with state and local governments that are canceling deals with **Arizona** businesses or calling on others to do so. "If they were truly invested in the **immigration** issue," he said, "they'd be pressing Washington for comprehensive **immigration** reform."

The last time **Arizona's image** suffered such a blow was in the 1980s, when many Republicans, including then-U.S. Rep. John McCain, opposed a national holiday honoring the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Woods, the former attorney general, said the moment inspired his winning campaign as a GOP promoter of civil rights. This time, he is counting on "intelligent, compassionate people from all **sides**" to find a compromise.

"There are some states that are pretty much lily-white. That's not our state," Woods said. "To be an Arizonan is to be a part of Mexico. It's to be a part of the various Native American tribes. That's part of our culture, the diversity. I think the people's hearts are there, but the **leaders** don't always respect that."

Polling analyst Jennifer Agiesta contributed to this report.

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