

## **Mask controversy spooks retailers**

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### **Body**

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Richard Zagone, a Chicago mask designer, says he was trying to be ironic when he and his brother came up with the "Illegal Alien" Halloween mask, a space alien with a droopy black mustache.

"We wanted to call it 'Lou Dobbs' Worst Nightmare,' " after he heard the CNN anchor speak about health care for illegal immigrants, Zagone says, but his lawyer wouldn't let him.

Now Zagone, who says he is "as left-wing as they come," is caught in a mini-firestorm over costumes their makers say are "illegal aliens." Some Hispanic and immigration groups say they are offensive.

One costume is an orange jumpsuit with the words "ILLEGAL ALIEN" on the front, a space alien mask and a plastic green card.

It created a stir on Facebook and Twitter because it was being sold on the websites of major retailers, including Target, Toys R Us, Walgreens, Meijer and Amazon. By Monday, all had quit selling the item.

It's "demeaning," says Brent Wilkes of the League of United Latin American Citizens. "The costumes say, 'These people are not human, they are aliens.' "

Walgreens spokeswoman Vivika Vergara says the chain's website stopped selling the costume "so it would not be subject to varied interpretation."

Jalem Getz, CEO of BuySeasons, which owns buycostumes.com, says the get-up is not offensive and he'll continue to sell it. "It's not a caricature of an illegal immigrant; it's a play on words," he says.

William Gheen of Americans for Legal Immigration, which favors tighter controls, put a costume on eBay. Bids went to \$116 before eBay pulled it.

"This is a spooky Halloween because, apparently, I no longer live in a country of free markets, free speech or free political expression," Gheen says.

Getz says the costume was not one of the company's top 200 sellers until all the attention. Then it sold out quickly.

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