

BUSINESS PUNISHMENTS RESISTED IN MIGRANT BILL

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Body

Arizona lawmakers considering new restrictions against illegal immigrants have stifled an attempt to punish **businesses** that get caught hiring illicit foreign labor.

Critics say the proposal to restrict illegal immigrants from receiving certain government benefits is unfair, because it focuses solely on illegal border-crossers yet does nothing to confront the other side of Arizona's immigration problems: employers who turn to immigrants for cheap labor.

"If we are going to do it, let's do it fair, let's do it consistent and let's not be hypocrites," said Democratic Sen. **Bill** Brotherton of Phoenix, who proposed adding eight employer sanctions on the immigrant-restriction proposal.

The sanctions would have revoked the tax benefits and required audits of **businesses** that get caught hiring illegal immigrants. Violators would no longer be eligible for state contracts, and their infractions would be posted on a state Web site.

Opponents said sanctions would place a huge burden on **businesses**, which are already limited by anti-discrimination laws in the way they can scrutinize prospective employees in determining whether they are legal workers.

A sanction to suspend the **business** licenses of violators for six months, which was initially approved and then stripped away, would have closed most small employers, said Farrell Quinlan of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce.

Lawmakers initially rejected the eight proposed employer sanctions Monday. Supporters of the sanctions then succeeded in reviving one of the measures, but lawmakers erased that decision and called off voting on the remaining **punishments**.

Brotherton said his proposals to punish employers who hire illegal immigrants will probably be considered again soon.

Both sides of the debate said the federal government hasn't done enough to fulfill its sole responsibility to enforce immigration laws already on the books, including enforcing a federal prohibition on hiring the thousands of foreign workers who sneak into the country each year.

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