

**Testimony before House Federal and State Affairs Committee
House Bill 2578- Enforcement, Determination of Citizenship
Presented by Eric Stafford, Senior Director of Government Affairs**



Thursday, February 16, 2012

Mister Chairman and members of the committee:

On behalf of the Kansas Business Coalition for Immigration Reform and the organizations listed at the end of my testimony, we appreciate the opportunity to speak in opposition to House Bill 2578 which upon reasonable suspicion that a person is unauthorized to be in the country, requires law enforcement officers to verify citizenship of that individual.

Our country's immigration policy is broken. It has long been ignored by Congress and over the past four years, states have unfortunately started taking the issue into their own hands. This new patchwork of immigration policy leads to concerns over multi-state compliance. For example, a business located in Olathe, KS could be in compliance for Kansas laws, but out of compliance when conducting business in Missouri. Probably the most unattractive patch on the quilt are the "law enforcement" style bills which passed first in Arizona, then last year in Georgia and Alabama, as well as Indiana and South Carolina passing "weaker" versions.

As one organization put it, these states are now the victims of their own success. They are all facing costs of defending these laws and won't stop until they get to the United States Supreme Court. The costs only begin to add up during litigation.

Today I would like to focus my testimony on the economic impact of these laws on states which have passed them. While fear mongering and intimidation tactics draw headlines, they don't necessarily result in good public policy.

Last year after the passage of Georgia's immigration bill, the agricultural industry immediately felt the effects of HB 87. After the Governor began hearing of complaints from businesses of the law's adverse impact, he asked Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black to investigate.

- He conducted a survey and found there to be a shortage of 11,080 workers.
- The Georgia Agribusiness Council estimated the monetary loss of unharvested crops to be around \$300 million with total economic loss approaching \$1 billion for 2011.

In addition to summoning Commissioner Black to survey the industry on the economic loss, Governor Deal also came up with a grand plan to use prison parolees to fill the vacancies left after he signed HB 87 into law. Some parolees quit after only hours on the job and all had quit by the end of the week.

Moving to Alabama which passed the most strict immigration law in America, some estimates show that 80,000 of the 120,000 legal and illegal immigrants have fled the state. The construction, agricultural and landscape/horticulture industries have been outspoken in the lack of available workers in the state.

The Kansas Chamber, with headquarters in Topeka, is the leading statewide pro-business advocacy group moving Kansas towards becoming the best state in America to do business. The Chamber represents small, medium and large employers all across Kansas.



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Attachment 9

One business owner in the landscaping industry received only two applications for a landscaping supervisor position. Most years they receive more than 30 applications. Another spent thousands training a crew of legally authorized immigrants, only to have them disappear after the law passed.

A report released by the Center for Business and Economic Research from the University of Alabama's College of Commerce and Business Administration concluded "Instead of boosting state economic growth, the law is certain to be a drag on economic development even without considering costs associated with its implementation and enforcement."

The Editorial Board of *Mobile's Press Register* last week released a powerful statement rebuking the efforts saying "Alabama allowed itself to be used as a guinea pig on illegal immigration so that a Kansas lawyer could build his political career." They added the nation's toughest law's unintended consequences have "discouraged industry...and been a drag on the state economy it was supposed to help."

Alabama hasn't only faced economic damage. They have also suffered a hit to their reputation. Alabama has taken aggressive steps to attract foreign businesses to the state. As a right-to-work state, Alabama has successfully recruited several foreign car manufacturers to their state to open assembly plants. Last fall, Alabama was back in the news after a German Executive Vice President for Mercedes-Benz was arrested and jailed after not carrying a driver's license while driving a rental car. He was imprisoned until his co-workers could get his passport and other documents proving he was authorized to be in the country. Twelve days later, a Japanese man with Honda suffered the same fate. Although he had his passport on him, he could not present an Alabama or country-of-origin license as required by law.

The Alabama legislature now looks to repeal many parts of the bill and former supporters would like to see the full repeal of the law, which is unlikely.

As I stated earlier this week, mass deportation is not a realistic approach to our nation's failed immigration policies. A 2010 estimate put the price of mass deportation at \$285 billion over five years. This represents over \$900 in new federal taxes for every U.S. man woman and child. The Cato Institute puts the price tag at \$80 billion, but that's just deporting 30% of the workers.

In summary, we now know the costs associated with a heavy-handed immigration policy based on law enforcement verification of citizenship are too significant to ignore. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today in opposition to HB 2578. I would be happy to answer any questions.

**Associated Builders and Contractors –
Heart of America Chapter
Corporate Immigration Compliance
Institute
Greater Topeka Chamber of Commerce
Kansas Economic Progress Council
Kansas Agribusiness Retailers
Association
Kansas Building Industry Association
Kansas Chamber of Commerce**

**Kansas Contractors Association
Kansas Cooperative Council
Kansas Corn Growers Association
Kansas Dairy Association
Kansas Economic Development Alliance
Kansas Farm Bureau
Kansas Grain and Feed Association
Kansas Livestock Association
Kansas Manufactured Housing
Association**

**Kansas Pork Association
Kansas Restaurant and Hospitality
Association
Kansas Society for Human Resource
Management
Kansans for Sensible Immigration
Policy
Manhattan Area Chamber of
Commerce**

**Mid-America Green Industry Council
Overland Park Chamber of Commerce
Kansas Builders Association
Unified Government of Wyandotte
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Wichita Independent Business
Association**