

# The High Costs and Risks of an Arizona-Style Law in Nebraska

Arizona-style “show me your papers” laws in other states are proving to be **socially toxic and economically self-defeating**. An Arizona-style law in Nebraska would rapidly create fiscal, economic, and social costs to our state, and would make us less safe. Since April 2010, Arizona has lost tens of millions of dollars in business and tax revenues as sporting events, conferences, and meetings have moved to other states. This has happened even though most of the law is not yet in effect (a federal court blocked key sections likely to be ruled unconstitutional). If the law were to go into effect, costs would skyrocket further.



## An Arizona-style law in Nebraska would...

### Create high fiscal and economic costs.

- Arizona has lost sporting events, conferences, and meetings to other states to the tune of **tens of millions of dollars**. One economic study estimated **\$141 million in lost spending** in the first seven months after the law passed. In the first week alone, the Arizona Hotel and Lodging Association reported that 19 meetings had been cancelled because of the law, representing **\$6 million in lost revenue** to the state. (“Arizona tourism loses more business in wake of immigration law vote,” *Washington Post*, 5/12/10, “Early Economic Impact of SB 1070: Tourism Takes \$6 Million Hit in First Week,” *The Tucson Weekly*, 5/3/10, *Stop the Conference: The Economic and Fiscal Consequences of Conference Cancellations Due to Arizona’s S.B. 1070*, [www.americanprogress.org](http://www.americanprogress.org))
- The City of Phoenix has estimated that boycotts could cost the city **\$90 million in hotel and convention business over five years**, not including incidental spending in local restaurants and shops. (“Phoenix Counts Big Boycott Cost,” *The New York Times*, 5/11/10)

### Harm Nebraska’s reputation – with consequences for business and the University.

- A similar Alabama law led to embarrassment when local police arrested and ticketed visiting business executives from Mercedes-Benz and Honda. (“Mercedes manager from Germany arrested on Alabama immigration charge,” *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, 11/18/11; “Honda worker caught in new Alabama immigration net,” *Reuters.com*, 12/1/11)
- In July 2010, Arizona’s governor allocated **\$250,000 to help repair the state’s image** because its “brand has been beaten up,” and “there is a sense that [Arizona] has fallen to the bottom, maybe as far as the South in the 1960s,” according to business leaders. (“Arizona Leaders Call on Brewer to Fix State’s Image,” *The Arizona Republic*, 9/9/10)
- Arizona’s law has caused lingering economic and reputational problems: “Negative publicity about Arizona has **hindered the ability of the University of Arizona and some businesses to lure the best and brightest** to Tucson, some officials say....The University of Arizona has heard from top professors and graduate students that they don't want to move to Arizona because of the law.” (“Arizona’s Scarlet letter? State’s tarnished image hurts our economy, critics say,” *Arizona Daily Star*, 5/3/11)

### Impose an unfunded mandate on Nebraska cities, counties, and law enforcement.

- In Prince William County, Virginia, the only place to implement an Arizona-style law, county supervisors repealed the law after finding it would cost a minimum of **\$14 million for five years**.
- The U.S. Conference of Mayors approved a resolution condemning Arizona’s new law and calling on Congress for swift federal reform. ([www.usmayors.org](http://www.usmayors.org))

### Endanger community safety and take police off the street.

- Many top law enforcement officials have opposed the law, including the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police, noting that fear of police will diminish the public’s willingness to report crimes and assist with the investigations, which will harm their ability to protect the community (AACOP statement)
- Many police have raised concerns that Arizona-style laws take police off the streets: the cost of implementation would cut into police budgets and reduce officers, and remaining officers would have to spend more time in the office processing immigration status for individuals without criminal records, rather than time on the street fighting crime.

## An Arizona-style law would...

### Expand a policy created to grow prison industry profits.

- An October NPR investigative report revealed “a quiet, behind-the-scenes effort to help draft and pass Arizona Senate Bill 1070 by...the private prison industry.” The law was born in a hotel room meeting of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a membership organization that includes the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) – the largest private prison company in the country. According to CCA reports obtained by NPR, its “executives believe immigrant detention is their next big market.” 30 of 36 Arizona co-sponsors received donations from prison lobbyists or prison companies. (“Prison Economics Help Drive Arizona Immigration Law, NPR, 10/28/10)

### Send a signal that Nebraska permits racial profiling.

- The Arizona law creates a “show me your papers” state that could lead to a trip down to the police station and a potentially lengthy detention for any of us not carrying sufficient documentation at all times. This would give pause to any professional thinking of locating their family here and create harm and humiliation to Nebraskans of color.

**Change our community environment.** For example, Fremont’s immigration law has already changed the town, even before the law goes into effect. Residents describe an environment that does not feel like Nebraska.

- “It is too sad. Somebody told us ‘go back to Mexico’ but we are from El Salvador. Anyway now with the ordinance we are planning to move to another state. We are legal permanent residents.”
- “June 26 my neighbors shouted ‘Go back to Mexico.’ Three days ago, while looking out the window I discovered that we were being fired at with BB guns. I am not afraid for myself but I am afraid for my children.”
- “I want you to know that they treat us very badly. People yell offensive things at us. I have a 10-year-old daughter and she told me that...she doesn’t want to go outside and play anymore. She spends her time shut inside.” (Statements collected 7/6/10. More statements at: [www.neappleseed.org/CIR](http://www.neappleseed.org/CIR))

### Allow out-of-state groups to conduct their legal experiments and leave Nebraska with the cost.

- These laws often rely on the work Kris Kobach, attorney for the legal arm of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), a well-funded national organization listed as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center (a leading civil rights organization) because of its founder’s writings and its repeated participation with white nationalist groups. Kobach helped draft the Arizona law and other local immigration ordinances that are failing in the courts. Fremont, NE, had to raise property taxes 18% to cover the first year of defending its ordinance. (*The Nativist Lobby*, [www.splcenter.org](http://www.splcenter.org))
- Former city councilwoman Carol Dingman from Farmers Branch, TX, a town with a Kobach-sponsored ordinance, said: “Our mayor said [Kobach] was an expert...who would help the city on a pro-bono basis....We will have paid almost \$4 million in legal fees at the end of this fiscal year. Mr. Kobach was paid \$100,000 of that. So much for pro bono.” (*Sand Mountain Reporter* 4/3/10, [mediamattersaction.org](http://mediamattersaction.org))

### What does the Arizona law do?

- It would require police to ask about immigration status during any lawful stop or arrest.
- Police may not release someone from custody until immigration status has been verified.
- It prevents government and police from focusing on violent crime.

(<http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/special-reports/qa-guide-arizonas-new-immigration-law>)

A patchwork of state and local laws to regulate immigration is not the answer. It would rapidly generate unmanageable costs for our state, cities, and police, and it would make us less safe. Instead our communities need common-sense immigration laws at the federal level – immigration laws that uphold our values and move us forward. There are also things state legislators can do to support integration: support community policing, wage enforcement, worker safety protections, English-language instruction, and small-business entrepreneurs – many of whom are immigrant Nebraskans – to help build local economies and grow jobs.