



# Testimony

Unified Government Public Relations  
701 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 620  
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

Mike Taylor, Public Relations Director  
913.573.5565 mtaylor@wycokck.org

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## Economic Impact of Immigration Enforcement on Local Governments

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The Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City opposes all of the “Arizona-style” immigration enforcement measures considered over the past two years by the Kansas Legislature because they are all unworkable, massive unfunded mandates on local governments. In fact the bulk of the costs of those enforcement efforts will fall on cities and counties.

### Public Safety

- So-called “show-me your papers” legislation puts unreasonable requirements on local police to do the work of federal immigration agents. The KCK Police Department responds to more than 212,000 calls a year. Having to verify citizenship of even a small percentage of the people involved in those cases will take officers off the streets for hours at a time, hurting public safety efforts. Crime in KCK at its lowest point in decades. Community policing and other public safety techniques which build contacts and trust amongst neighborhoods and other citizen groups played a major role in that crime reduction. The provisions of so-called “show-me-your-papers” undercut the very foundation of community policing.
- The bill will also create problems for the Wyandotte County jail in terms of overcrowding and increased expense. The Unified Government already spends \$14-million a year operating the jail. Making unverified citizens sit in a cell until their citizenship is confirmed or federal immigration agents pick them up will take up space needed for people who commit felony crimes and it will increase the annual jail budget. A six-year-old Colorado law that requires local law enforcement to report suspected illegal immigrants to federal authorities is costing local agencies in the state more than \$13-million annually. The Colorado Fiscal Institute's study tallies the cost of arresting, reporting and detaining undocumented immigrants and found that they spend an average of 22 days longer in county jails than other arrestees and that local communities are paying that cost.

### Public Benefits

One bill would make it illegal to provide public benefits to an undocumented resident. Here a few examples of how difficult, harmful and workable this is for local governments.

- Wyandotte County Health Department is frontline medical care for many of our residents when it comes to prevention and nutrition. 30,000 individuals make 80,000 visits a year for health services. Having to verify citizenship will be an administrative nightmare. Imagine turning away a pregnant mother who comes to our pre-natal clinic for baby vitamins because her citizenship can't be readily confirmed. How many pregnant women will be denied health care because they can't readily prove citizenship?
- The Unified Government owns the Board of Public Utilities which provides electric and water service to most of our 155,000 citizens. Previous legislation required anyone over 18 entering into a contract with local government must provide documentation of citizenship. How would BPU confirm every application for electric and water service?

- Kansas City Kansas requires every business operating in the city to obtain a business license. In 2102, KCK had more than 7,500 licensed businesses. Big businesses such as General Motors, to small service and retail businesses. There is no way licensing staff can process and conform that volume of documents.
- Verifying citizenship will also complicate and harm economic development efforts. For example, The Sporting Park soccer stadium and Cerner Continuous Campus in Village West. Or the Hollywood Casino at Kansas Speedway. Can all of those companies prove they are eligible to receive public benefits of tax incentives by verifying all of their employees are documented?

### **Purchasing**

- Requiring the Unified Government to confirm that every business we do business with is using E-Verify would delay and complicate the bid and contracting process. All of the added regulations would have to be paid for and those additional costs will show up in the bid prices costing all taxpayers. Staff would have to be added to handle an E-verify mandate.

### **Litigation**

- One version of a bill from two years ago allowed a citizen who thinks the local government isn't enforcing the law enough to sue; a citizen or company who believes they have been discriminated against or wrongfully treated could sue; and it's not unreasonable to think the federal government might file a lawsuit against not only the state, but an individual city. The city of Fremont, Nebraska was forced to increase property taxes 18% to cover \$750,000 in legal fees defending that cities immigration enforcement law.

### **What Other States Have Learned**

In 2011, Kentucky, Louisiana and Tennessee abandoned "Arizona-style" bills after official fiscal notes estimated that those bills would cost state and local government agencies tens of millions of dollars to build the necessary bureaucracy and conduct training and government oversight related to implementation

- \$40-million in Kentucky—in a best-case scenario. Legislative staff in Kentucky estimated its immigration bill would have cost \$89-million over several years to implement. Even assuming the state could save tens of millions in social services and would lose no tax revenues from immigrants who left the net impact of the bill would have been a \$40-million loss to the state.
- \$11- million each year in Louisiana. Representative Ernest Wooton abandoned his attempt to pass an Arizona-style law in 2011 once he saw the state legislature's estimate of its price tag: \$11-million in enforcement, training, and other implementation costs.
- \$5-million in year one and \$2.8-million in subsequent years in Tennessee. Between the costs to the state government itself and the Tennessee constitutional requirement that the state government pick up at least some of the costs incurred by local governments,

A community like Kansas City will be impacted harder than many others. The US Census numbers show almost 28% of our population is Hispanic. Raising property taxes to pay for the unfunded mandates "Arizona-style" enforcement laws is not a sound option in Wyandotte County. More likely, the negative budget impacts of such bills will have to be paid for by further cuts in services and elimination of more programs. It's a heavy price to impose on the majority of our citizens to try and identify a small percentage of illegal residents.