



House speaker launches review of new employer sanctions law

The Associated Press
Aug. 15, 2007 04:16 PM

PHOENIX - House Speaker Jim Weiers on Wednesday announced he is forming a special committee to review the new employer sanctions law that was drawn both praise and criticism.

The panel will provide a forum for business owners and others to express concerns and ask questions while allowing the Legislature to convey information that should alleviate unfounded fears about the law's enforcement provisions, Weiers said.

[Block](#)

But the Phoenix Republican also said that the law is both constitutional and fair and that he opposes any effort to weaken it.

"There's no buyer's remorse," Weiers told The Associated Press in an interview.

The law takes effect next month, and its penalties for employers who hire undocumented workers kick in January 1.

Critics of the law say it could unfairly hammer businesses that make mistakes and that it intrudes on a federal area of responsibility. Supporters say it was crafted to only target wrongdoers and that it is needed to eliminate a lure - jobs - for illegal immigrants.

The law would suspend or revoke business licenses, but employers who use a federal system to crosscheck new hires' names and Social Security numbers gain at least a partial legal shield.

"I'm not looking in any way to take away the intent of work enforcement, but as a business person too ... I want to make sure that the good businesses are not jeopardized in any way," Weiers said.

The law's chief legislative architect said Wednesday he expects to participate in the committee's activities and that he doesn't regard its formation by Weiers as a threat to the law.

"It's a reaction to just a lot of whining and moaning and groaning and gnashing of teeth out there," said Rep. Russell Pearce, R-Mesa.

Since the law was approved, Weiers said he and other lawmakers have heard both criticism and praise from business owners and others. Much of the concern stems from lack of information and misinformation

about the law and what it will actually do.

"More than anything else, I want people to be honest and free with their comments. I don't want paranoia and I certainly don't want business to be fearful of operating in Arizona. But I do want compliance with the law."

Weiers said the committee will include representatives of business groups, including Wake Up Arizona, a group that recently announced it will mount a public relations campaign against the law. Wake Up Arizona chairman Mac Magruder, a restaurant owner, did not immediately return a call for comment on Weiers' creation of the committee.

Other business groups have filed a lawsuit in federal court challenging the law.

In signing the law, Democratic Gov. Janet Napolitano said state action was warranted, partly because a multipronged U.S. Senate bill on immigration had failed. She said Wednesday that a comprehensive federal bill is needed but acknowledged that it might have to wait until the next president takes office in 2009.

Napolitano also said her staff was still trying to arrange a meeting between her and top legislative leaders to discuss the possibility of a special session to take action on perceived flaws in the sanctions law.

However, Weiers and Pearce said that would be premature and that possible changes evident so far can wait for action early in the 2008 regular session.

"It is premature," Weiers said. "(Enforcement of) the law has not taken effect yet."

"A special session is not necessary," Pearce said.

On the Net:

Arizona Legislature: <http://www.azleg.state.az.us>

AP-WS-08-15-07 1858EDT