

OPINION

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TODAY'S TOPIC: STATE LAWMAKERS TAKE ON IMMIGRATION

Immigration bills up for votes

Costly copycat law ignores backlash, common sense

By Stephen Fotopulos

There is a handful of lawmakers who seem tone-deaf to the state's economic crisis, instead squandering legislative resources with a scattershot assault on immigrants and refugees.

This week alone, eight bills are in committee that would make life more difficult for everyone from immigrant school kids (HB 1085) and Muslim community members (SB 1028) to anyone still learning English (SB 10). There's even a bill to give local governments the authority, after public hearings, to declare that no more refugees should be resettled in their community (HB 1632). But the most costly and dangerous effort is undeniably Rep. Joe Carr's Arizona-copycat bill (HB 1380), imitating the most controversial provision of Arizona's "show me your papers" law.

Rep. Carr would have us believe he's proposing something



Last year, diverse communities came together to oppose a previous version of the Arizona copycat bill that goes before a legislative committee today. LARRY MCCORMACK / FILE / TENNESSEAN

tion agents, demanding anyone "reasonably suspicious" be ready to present citizenship papers. But the bill fails to define when suspicion is reasonable, leaving it up to individual officers to decide. When U.S. Rep. Brian Bilbray, R-Calif., defended Arizona's law last year, he said that state's law is "one of the most restrictive in the country." In this economy, it's hard to imagine our representatives would drastically expand the role of state government and impose costly new burdens on taxpayers. There's a reason Arizona is quickly backpedaling; they've lost \$150 million in revenue. AC-