

Dear Legislator,

We urge you to modify key provisions of House Bill 1446 and Senate Bill 908, and avoid negatively impacting Oklahoma's economy.

The Tulsa Metro Chamber and the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber serve as economic development organizations, recruiting potential employers and retaining valuable existing employers. Attracting and sustaining high-wage jobs is a top priority, and to do so Oklahoma must offer a high quality of life and competitive economic development incentives. The state is making significant advances with its pro-business policies and reputation, and we seek to build on the vision of your leadership.

Equally important to business incentives and quality of life initiatives is the public image Oklahoma conveys to prospective businesses and workers. In reviewing economic data, we recognize successful states and economic regions welcome a diversity of individuals, talents, and insights. Time and again, experts list inclusivity as a critical component to headquarter recruitment efforts and retention of new college graduates.

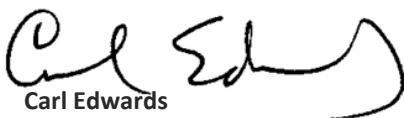
Passing Arizona-style immigration reform will significantly damage our ability to recruit companies and individuals. Passing similar legislation in Oklahoma will not only tarnish the state's image in the United State and worldwide; it will also devastate the tourism and convention industries. The message sent with state immigration reform will resonate with all companies, students, conventions and major events considering Oklahoma for relocation. Please see [Attachment 1](#) for a summary of the economic devastation suffered by Arizona's tourism, convention and other businesses as a result of its immigration bill.

Like many of you, we strongly believe the federal government has failed to provide an immigration system to both protect the U.S. borders, while also meeting the workforce needs of our businesses and industries. We understand the desire to take action on a state level to remedy this roadblock. But immigration law is, at its core, a federal issue. **Yesterday, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals refused to lift a stay blocking enforcement of Arizona's immigration law from taking effect and said the federal government will likely prove the harsh law is unconstitutional.** Any attempt to pass Arizona-style immigration reform in Oklahoma will almost certainly prompt a lawsuit by the Justice Department, and require state funds to defend the lawsuit. These are funds that would be far better spent on rehabilitating our failing infrastructure, educating our children, and building a strong economy and job market in Oklahoma. Please see [Attachment 2](#) for a list of provisions in House Bill 1446 and Senate Bill 908 that we believe need to be modified or eliminated to prevent the losses suffered by Arizona.

In closing, we urge you to consider the long-term financial consequences of such a bill before acting. Thank you in advance for your consideration, and please feel free to call upon us as resources if we can be of any assistance.




Gerard Clancy
Chair, Board of Directors
Tulsa Metro Chamber



Carl Edwards
Chair, Board of Directors
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber
Partner, Price Edwards Company



Michael S. Neal, CCE, CCD
President and CEO
Tulsa Metro Chamber



Roy H. Williams
President and CEO
Greater Oklahoma City Chamber

ATTACHMENT 1
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ARIZONA'S IMMIGRATION BILL ON TOURISM,
CONVENTION AND OTHER BUSINESSES

- Within one week after passage, **19** conventions which had selected Arizona cancelled; within two months, this number had risen to **40**.
- A study released on November 18, 2010, concluded that SB 1070 resulted in **\$250 million in losses** to the state's conference and convention industry, including the loss of **2,700 jobs**, **\$86.5 million in wages** for Arizona workers and nearly **\$10 million in tax revenue for the state**.
- The same study predicts total damage to the conference industry will ultimately reach **\$388 million**.
- The Economic Development Commissions in both Phoenix and Tucson have stated several economic development projects were lost because of the law. Due to the confidential nature of economic development projects, specific information is not disclosed.

Furthermore, companies, organizations, and governmental entities called for boycotts of Arizona. Cities from across the country — including Denver, Minneapolis, Columbus, St. Paul, Seattle, San Francisco, and Oakland — passed resolutions barring employees from traveling to Arizona on business. The ensuing impact of these boycotts are severe causing the United States Travel Association to publicly call for an end to Arizona travel boycotts to prevent massive job losses and long-term damage to the state's economy.

Some have tried to attribute these staggering losses in Arizona's convention and tourism industries to the larger collapse of the nation's economy. **Doing so deliberately ignores three key elements of Arizona's losses:** first, municipalities, businesses and organizations specifically pointed to Arizona's harsh immigration law in refusing to do business within the state (noted above). Second, Arizona had **19** conventions cancel within the first week of SB 1070's passage, and **40** within the first two months; within this same period of time, Oklahoma City has **zero** cancellations. And third, the Arizona Hotel and Lodging Commission's records show Phoenix plummeted from the nation's **4th most-popular convention destination** before passage of SB 1070 — to **23rd** **it its aftermath**.

These losses were not mirrored in other states, nor did they occur along the timeline of the nation's economic recession. These results are directly linked to the passage of harsh immigration policies by Arizona's State Legislature, and the ensuing reactions of the national and international business communities.

ATTACHMENT 2
CONCERNS WITH PROVISIONS OF HB 1446 AND SB 908

- 1. Significant “racial profiling” provisions remain in both SB 908 and HB 1446** (SB 908, Sections 4 and 11, HB 1446, Sections 1 and 2). The harsh backlash against Arizona is primarily attributable to the “racial profiling” provisions contained in its immigration legislation—those provisions that permit or require a law enforcement official to verify immigration status upon a “reasonable suspicion” that a person may be in the country illegally. Although Arizona quickly amended its legislation to state that an officer’s “reasonable suspicion” couldn’t be based on a person’s race, religion or national origin”, the amendment had no impact. If we leave these and/or similar provisions in SB 908 and HB 1446, we can expect the same economic devastation to our convention and tourism industries.
- 2. The broad definitions being applied to “smuggling of human beings”** (HB 1446, Section 2; SB 908, Section 1). As currently written, this language has little to do with human trafficking. Instead, it places the burden of enforcement on businesses and individuals who transport others or lease and sell property — without providing the necessary tools to properly and accurately determine immigration status — while simultaneously punishing those who fail to do so. We strongly believe immigration enforcement should exist solely in the hands of trained law enforcement officials, and to do otherwise places an unfair burden on business owners and individual citizens.
- 3. Requiring employers to verify the immigration status of employees through E-Verify or lose access to economic development incentives** (SB 908, Section 10). This requirement is both duplicative for businesses, and an unreliable means of verifying immigration status. First, employers are already required to use the I-9 identification system in hiring new employees. Second, E-Verify is still not reliable. In 2010, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report titled, “Federal Agencies Have Taken Steps to Improve E-Verify, But Significant Challenges Remain.” Another report found that in 2010, 56,000 illegal immigrants were identified as being lawfully in the U.S. by E-Verify. This is a burdensome, complicated process to force businesses to utilize —especially given the challenges and inaccuracies reported.
- 4. Prohibiting a person here illegally from receiving a college scholarship or paying in-state tuition** (HB 1446, Section 5). We strongly believe the key to economic and social success lies in a well-educated workforce. Increasing the number of college graduates is a key indicator of future economic potential, and creates a stronger labor pool for Oklahoma businesses and civic organizations. We are firmly against any actions barring college access to those within Oklahoma, and reducing the number of college-educated individuals within our state.