Talking Enforcement Issues - Legislation

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Talking about bad immigration legislation, such as Arizona’s S.B. 1070 and its rampant copycats, provides immigration advocates with a chance to show the American public the dangerous consequences of anti-immigrant fervor. This is a prime opportunity to unite our voices around the three common themes of the core narrative that immigration advocates from around the country have developed and promoted: **We need workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values and move us forward together.** We recommend the following:

- **Use the narrative.** The more we use the same main themes when talking about immigration, the more we can start to control the larger story and drown out the divisive voices that have dominated the discourse for too long. To this end, we recommend that all messages be built around the narrative themes.

- **But tailor it to your audiences.** Using common themes does not mean we need to use the same messages. We can tailor language, statistics, metaphors, and stories to best suit each of our audiences. But sticking to the same themes is important.

  - Messages about Upholding Our Nation’s Values can underscore the importance of fairness, justice, and equality, while talking about standing up for the kind of country we want to be.

  - Workable Solutions can be messaged by pointing out the impracticality of the bill, that it makes law enforcement’s jobs more difficult, and that it’s not the kind of solution we need.

  - Moving Us Forward Together is a reminder to tell audiences why the bill is bad for everyone, while also dividing communities.

- **Include positive solutions.** This is an opportunity to talk about what works. Recent research shows that a conversation without our own positive solutions can quickly turn to support for enforcement measures. The public does not want to hear that we are suggesting that existing laws not be enforced.
Talking Point Examples

These laws are impractical, violate our values, and divide our communities. We need real solutions that embrace fairness, equal treatment, and due process. Our immigration system is broken, but disregarding our values is not the answer to fixing it. Congress needs to act now.

This law is racial profiling, pure and simple. And singling people out based only on stereotyping isn’t just wrong, it’s also bad policing. Our communities need Congress to focus on workable solutions that uphold our values and move us all forward together [or your own community-specific solution]. Fixing our immigration system the right way is about what kind of country we want to be. This law certainly illustrates what we don’t want to become.

This law looks a lot like Arizona’s controversial S.B. 1070, four parts of which were just struck down by the Ninth Circuit of Appeals. We don’t want to go in that direction, which is obviously misguided. We need to take a look at what our community really needs, which is a commitment to expanding our economy, supporting our schools, and making sure we all can succeed here.

We should take a close look at what this measure could do to our state. First, what it won’t do: it won’t fix any of our problems. It won’t balance our budget, create more jobs, provide affordable health care, or educate our children. Instead, it forces law enforcement into a role they don’t want: as immigration agents. It further stresses our budget through increased jail costs and the price of likely legal challenges. And it violates our most basic values by encouraging racial profiling. As we consider this law’s impact on our state, we need to ask ourselves – is this the kind of state we want to be? I think we can do better.

I don’t want to live in a state that encourages anything resembling racial profiling – and I fear this law could do exactly that. I seriously hope the Legislature rethinks this legislation and looks for better and more productive ways to deal with immigration in our state.

While I don’t have all the answers on how to deal with immigration in our state, I’m fairly certain that this is the wrong approach. It places huge burdens on both law enforcement and employers by requiring all sorts of new responsibilities of them. It threatens our economy by making us a target of the kind of boycotts that have crippled regions with similar laws. And it’s an enormous distraction from the real problems we’re facing. Times like these call for sensible solutions, not political grandstanding that spawns unintended consequences.