

# Hispanic leaders say 'tide is turning' on anti-immigration legislation

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Topeka — Hispanic advocates are hailing the rejection of an Arizona-like immigration bill in Kansas and in other states as a sign that the country may be ready for a constructive debate on immigration.

“We are heartened that the tide is turning and that these legislatures are realizing that, in a time of unprecedented fiscal crisis, considering legislation, which is costly, discriminatory and completely ineffective, is a waste of both politicians’ and taxpayers’ time,” said Janet Murguía, president and chief executive officer of the National Council of La Raza.

Murguía, a Kansas native and former executive vice chancellor for university relations at Kansas University, said several other states, including Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, Nebraska, New Hampshire, South Dakota, Virginia and Wyoming, have also recently rejected what she called extreme anti-immigrant, anti-Latino legislation.

Her comments as leader of the country’s largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization were made after the Kansas House last week voted 84-40 against a procedural move to consider a bill that would have required law enforcement officers to check the legal status of people they suspected of being in the country illegally.

The policing measure in House Bill 2372 mirrored an Arizona law that is at the center of fierce legal challenge. The Kansas bill had the backing of Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who also helped write the Arizona law.

But a cross-section of representatives, including Democrats and conservative Republicans representing agricultural interests, voted against bringing the bill up. Some argued that it would have led to racial profiling, while others said it would have been burdensome to business and police.

Another bill, sought by Kobach and others, would repeal the state law that allows in-state tuition for some undocumented students.

The legislation has been approved by the House, but earlier this month, a Senate committee voted against advancing it. Gov. Sam Brownback, a Republican, has also signaled he is not interested in repealing the current law.

Lalo Munoz, with the Latino Informational Network of Kansas, said immigration issues should be handled nationally.

“It’s extremely complicated and not going to be solved on a state-by-state basis,” Munoz said.

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