

## **ILLEGAL-IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN HURTS BUSINESS**

### **U.S. report finds new laws can prove unworkable for smaller companies**

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WASHINGTON - A crackdown by scores of U.S. states and municipalities on illegal immigration threatens the competitiveness of businesses across the country, a U.S. Chamber of Commerce report said on Friday.

The report looked at more than 1,500 measures proposed throughout the United States. Of these, more than 240 have become law in 46 states, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

State lawmakers and some employers told a news conference that the laws — some of which target services sought by illegal immigrants and others the people hiring them — amount to a confusing patchwork that would prove unworkable for smaller businesses such as construction firms.

"What these state and local laws are requiring our builders to do, small business people, is to comply with the various immigration laws across all these counties," said Jerry Howard, executive vice president of the National Association of Home Builders. "It's very, very difficult. It literally can't be done."

The Chamber of Commerce report follows a study by the National Conference of State Legislatures last month that showed states came up with more than twice the number of immigration-related bills this year compared with last year.

Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos, a Democrat in the Washington State House of Representatives, argued that a lack of federal action on immigration had also affected large firms.

She said software giant Microsoft decided to move one of its units to British Columbia, Canada, after an effort to legalize an estimated 12 million illegal immigrants and create a temporary worker program sought by business groups failed in the U.S. Senate in June.

"That means millions of dollars that are lost to my state and the economy of our country when we fail to offer legitimate economic employment opportunity to legal permanent resident immigrants," she said.

But some were skeptical that state and local immigration laws threatened business competitiveness.

Steven Camarota, research director at the pro-enforcement Center for Immigration Studies think tank in Washington, said most illegal immigrants were unskilled workers.

"Before you buy into that kind of argument you have to take a step back and ask what kind of labor do illegal immigrants provide?" Camarota said.

"I find it very hard to take seriously the argument that the key to a state's economic success depends on having a lot of high school dropouts."