

South Carolina Immigration Law Exempts Sitters, Housekeepers, Farmworkers

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COLUMBIA, S.C. – Immigration laws fuel fear in many immigrant communities, but in South Carolina, some undocumented immigrants have no need to worry about the state's tough new law.

The law, which seeks to crack down undocumented workers by requiring employers to verify their immigration status through a federal database, does not apply to farm workers, housekeepers and nannies.

The law went into effect January 1 and requires all private employers in South Carolina to use the federal E-Verify database to check newly hired employees' immigration status.

Bill supporter Sen. Chip Campsen says the loophole was necessary to get the legislation passed. The Charleston Republican says he opposed the exemption but said it doesn't make the bill ineffective.

Critics say it is unfair for legislators to create an exemption for select groups and not provide it to other small businesses.

The exempted groups also include ministers and fishermen working in small crews.

As in some other states that have passed anti-illegal immigration laws, some South Carolina officials have been mindful of the disapproval over such laws by many employers in the state's \$34 billion agribusiness sector.

Many agricultural employers have said strict immigration laws could leave them with a shortage of labor. Many employers have said such laws -- though drafted for people who are undocumented -- tend to scare off legal immigrants, too.

State legislators recently put aside legislation that would eliminate the state Migrant Farm Workers Commission, a resource of sorts for farm workers.

The plan had been to incorporate the duties of the commission -- made up of six farmers appointed by Gov. [Nikki Haley](#), a Republican -- into the Commission for Minority Affairs.

But critics said the commission was crucial. It handles a myriad of things -- including health, labor conditions and transportation -- concerning the workers.

“Our state would be flat on its face and prostrate without migrant labor, and I don’t want to do anything that would negatively affect (it),” said Republican State Sen. Danny Verdin, according to [Savannahnow.com](#). “We’re already in a fragile environment as it is relating to others aspects — immigration law.”

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