

Tancredo's next focus: state immigration battles

Tancredo plans to keep fighting illegal migrants

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[Anne C. Mulkern](#), The Denver Post

WASHINGTON - Tom Tancredo plans to take his battle against illegal immigration all over the country when he leaves Congress at the end of this year.

The Littleton Republican, who ran for president on the issue of illegal immigration, wants to start an organization to work with state and local leaders to pass immigration-related laws.

And he's dreaming big.



Tancredo would seek laws like one in Arizona that yanks business licenses from employers caught hiring undocumented workers. He likes one in Oklahoma that requires proof of citizenship for government benefits and makes it a felony to knowingly house or transport illegal immigrants.

And he favors ordinances like one in a northern Virginia county that allows police officers to question the legal status of anyone stopped for any reason.

Rep. Tom Tancredo (CO-6) "When I look at Arizona and Oklahoma, I see movement," Tancredo said. "I see that we have momentum on our side, and I want to keep it going."

Since 2006, when Colorado passed several immigration laws, including one toughening identification requirements to get state aid, numerous state and local governments have followed suit. Nine states that year introduced legislation aimed at restricting services to illegal immigrants or their ability to get jobs.

Tancredo said he believes there's still great hunger for these types of ordinances and concern that the next president won't toughen immigration laws. Others aren't as sure.

States and counties aren't eager to pass laws that increase law enforcement's workload or clog courts, said Tanis Salant, a University of Arizona professor of public administration.

After the Oklahoma law passed last May and the Arizona law passed in December, "everyone was expecting that lots of states would start to copy," said Tamar Jacoby, an immigration expert at the conservative Manhattan Institute for Policy Research. "In fact, very few have copied."

Virginia, for example, started its legislative year with more than 100 proposed immigration laws, she said. It passed only a few minor ones.

Laws like those in Arizona and Oklahoma force businesses to close or discourage them from opening in a state, Jacoby said.

She recently started ImmigrationWorks USA, a nonprofit working with business groups in 20 states to prevent laws like those in Arizona and Oklahoma.

"Tom Tancredo is a worthy adversary," Jacoby said, but he's not likely to persuade too many.

Bay Buchanan, who chaired Tancredo's presidential campaign and is likely to work with him on the new effort, disputes Jacoby's views.

"Where the whole state's not ready, you'll see it happening in parts of the state," Buchanan said, citing ordinances in Prince William County, Va.

Where there's a desire for change, she and Tancredo could "let them know how it's done, what to do, what not to do, what holds up in the courts."

Prince William County acted because of the impact of illegal immigration on schools, hospitals and communities, said Corey A. Stewart, Board of Supervisors chairman.

A July ordinance requiring the county jail to check the legal status of inmates has led to 468 deportations with another 280 pending, Stewart said.

"Every locality is going to do what's best for it," he said. "The localities can be seen as a laboratory to see what works best."

Passing local ordinances and state laws "keeps the pressure on at the federal level," Tancredo said.

Tancredo is known for making shocking statements, and that could hurt his ability to work with local governments, said former Colorado Gov. Dick Lamm, a Democrat who agrees with Tancredo that illegal immigration needs to stop.

"Tom would have a little bit of difficulty putting together the various coalitions that generally exist on a local level," he said.

Tancredo said he knows he is accused of hate-mongering but that such views are just a way to avoid dealing with the issue.

He could start his organization within a month after leaving office, Tancredo said.

He's not sure what form it would take and whether it would resist political advocacy. If it did, contributions to it would be tax-deductible. If the group backed candidates or prospective laws, contributions would not be tax-deductible.

Buchanan said there may be room for both.

"Whenever the federal government abandons an issue, people at the local level start to do it," Tancredo said. "I would like to help them."

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