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## Arizona law in Decatur?

### Irondale approves similar immigrant measure; Russell seeks input on whether River City should do same

By Evan Belanger  
Staff Writer

Arizona's controversial new immigration law is stirring local discussion that could lead to Decatur adopting similar rules.

In an e-mail sent Thursday to councilmen and City Attorney Herman Marks, Councilman Ronny Russell requested input on whether Decatur should adopt an ordinance kindred to one the Irondale City Council approved Tuesday.

The ordinance, which Irondale Councilman Craig Sanderson told news agencies he based on Arizona's law, allows police to check the immigration status of individuals during traffic stops or criminal investigations. It notes officers are allowed to share that information with federal agents for a variety of reasons.

Questioned about his e-mail, Russell said he supports the concept of Arizona's law, and that similar rules to the Irondale ordinance would likely work in Decatur.

"At this time, I am not proposing that we do this, but (I) did want to discuss, learn, and explore our options," he wrote in an e-mail to The Daily.

His statement comes just two days after the U.S. Department of Justice filed a lawsuit asking that Arizona's law be declared invalid, charging it interferes with powers exclusively vested with the federal government.

The law, which Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer signed April 23, makes it a misdemeanor crime for aliens to be in the state without carrying federally required registration documents. It also authorizes local law officers to enforce federal immigration rules.

Critics have argued the law encourages racial profiling, but supporters say it merely enforces existing federal law. Russell said he saw no reason those visiting the United States should not be asked about their country of origin or their legal status.

"If you or I were in most any other country," he wrote, "I feel certain the police would have the authority and/or requirement to ask us."

He added that, regardless of the outcome of the federal lawsuit, Arizona lawmakers had "boldly and clearly expressed their frustration and anger with the illegal immigrant situation."

Questioned about Russell's e-mail, three of Decatur's five councilmen said they were open to exploring the matter as long as the city can adopt and enforce the ordinance legally.

"I think we want to look at anything we can do to deter illegal immigration that we can put some teeth into and do something with," said Councilman Roger Anders.

Only Councilman Billy Jackson reserved judgment, saying he needed to take a closer look at Irondale's ordinance before making a decision.

### Lawyer opposes it

City Attorney Herman Marks was not available at his office Thursday to comment on the matter. But Russell said Marks has repeatedly told councilmen that federal laws prevent them from passing such an ordinance.

"Apparently Irondale feels differently," he wrote.

But Zayne Smith, immigration policy fellow for the Montgomery-based advocacy group Alabama Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, said his group strongly discourages Decatur and other cities from following Irondale's lead, mainly because immigration is a federal issue.

She said ordinances similar to Irondale's create an atmosphere "ripe for racially profiling," adding it could lead to distrust between police and immigrant communities, making it more difficult for police to help people.

"You're going to have less people reporting crimes, and you're going to have less people willing to help people investigate reported crimes," she said. "It's a very slippery slope."

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Smith said Irondale and other cities that enact ordinances based on the Arizona law will likely face lawsuits aimed at overturning the legislation.

In Irondale, Police Chief Jerry McIntosh told The Birmingham News his officers already had the right to check immigration status and report violations to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. He said the new ordinance works to support that authority.

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On 7/9/10 at 01:55 AM, **E from** wrote:

Why not ask for proof of citizenship? I wouldn't mind being asked for proof of citizenship. If you are here legally there is nothing to worry about or object to. If profiling is the problem then just ask everyone for proof of citizenship including passengers in vehicles or other occupants of a residency when officers called and that will end the problem. I believe this would end the problem of the profiling. Everyone would be treated equally.

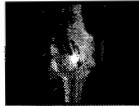
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On 7/9/10 at 03:03 AM, **William from Hartselle** wrote:

See this garbage about the US suing Arizona is BS. And Zayne Smith doesn't know what he is talking about. If the law permits a "sanctuary city" then it certainly permits the city to pass an ordinance ENFORCING federal law. The liberals will wash and wash this garbage heap of a lawsuit in the foul waters of political correctness and hurl insults at and call opponents racist but the bottom line is we as Americans are sick and

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