

E-Verify debate rages on Springfield News-Leader (Missouri) January 15, 2012 Sunday

"My opinion is I don't know why you wouldn't want to E-Verify that somebody you're looking to hire is an American citizen. It's a very easy thing to do."

The proposal already has drawn opposition from the NAACP and the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, which has 2,100 members.

The chamber voted to oppose it because "on its face, the proposed ordinance is illegal," according to Chamber board Chairman Jerry Harmison.

Local NAACP president Cheryl Clay said the organization will oppose the measure because "The Minutemen ordinance is not the same as the federal pilot program known as E-Verify -- it is legally flawed, poorly written and far exceeds established federal and state guidelines currently in place."

A 2009 study by the Bloomberg business data company concluded it cost \$127 on average per query for a company with 500 or fewer employees to run an E-Verify check.

Updated for 2010, that cost rose to \$147, according to Bloomberg. The cost includes staff time to learn how to do E-Verify queries, time to train other employees and manuals and forms used in the process.

However, Cheryl Zielke, office manager at Carson-Mitchell, laughed at the Bloomberg cost figures.

She said it took an hour-and-a-half of her time to read the E-Verify manual, take and pass an online test and set up the E-Verify link on her computer.

A typical E-Verify query takes less than two minutes to complete, Zielke said.

"If they say it costs \$127 to do one of these then someone is making a heck of a lot more than me," she quipped.

One of Springfield's largest employers -- Mercy St. John's -- has been doing E-Verify checks on new hires since September 2009.

Jim Brookhart, senior vice president of human resources, said there's a time commitment for his staff to do the queries, "but there's no expense to us."

"We just rolled it into their regular duties," Brookhart said.

He said Mercy hires close to 1,000 people a year, but so far none has been rejected by E-Verify.

However, two years ago Mercy used the E-Verify process retroactively for all its active employees.

Mercy spokeswoman Cora Scott said the hospital "did let two people go because they did not have legal clearance."

What about a company that's not in Springfield but does business in the city?

██████████ secretary and human resources assistant at Dale's Roofing, said about 80 percent of her company's work is done in Springfield though the company is located in Rogersville.

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