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Editorials & Opinions

Dangerous Proposition

Sally Curd, Aztec Press

If you are not a U.S. citizen, Proposition 300 could prevent you from getting education benefits such as scholarships, tuition waivers and grants that are paid for with state money.

If you are a parent without legal status, you could be denied eligibility for child care assistance even if your children are U.S. citizens.

Proposition 300, possibly the most controversial proposition on the November ballot, will hurt our state's undocumented younger residents. Many undocumented people, including college students, have been in Arizona all their lives. They did not have a choice about being here, but with Proposition 300 they will be denied many government services based on their legal status.

If passed, Proposition 300 will:

- *deny in-state tuition status for community college and state university tuition purposes to non-legal residents

- *deny tuition waivers, grants, scholarships or other financial assistance paid in whole or part by state funds to non-legal residents

- *deny child-care assistance from the Arizona Department of Economic Security to non-legal resident parents even if the children are U.S. citizens

- *restrict non-legal residents from adult education classes offered by the Arizona Department of Education.

Much of the push for sentiment behind the Proposition 300 movement is directly linked to immigration, said Petra Falcon of the Pima County Interfaith Council.

“They think it will do something about the border issue. It will not solve any border-issue problems,” Falcon said, and it will not stop the flow of immigrants into Arizona.

Proposition 300 has been called mean-spirited and counterproductive to the assimilation of undocumented immigrants. Falcon said she believes it is a last-ditch effort by politicians to target the most vulnerable in our community.

“They have been unsuccessful with other immigration bills so they are trying to attack the

moderates,” she said. “It is very polarizing.”

The government will be denying services to those who need them most. Those who have recently immigrated to the United States stand to benefit the most from adult education classes in English, reading and life skills.

According to the Pima Interfaith Council, most adult education students are employed and are paying taxes. Adult education classes help them become full participants in our society, and prepare parents to better help their children succeed in school.

One of the requirements of Proposition 300 is that community colleges and universities report statistics regarding the number of people who do not receive government assistance due to citizenship or immigration status, so administering the proposition could be very costly.

Greg Hart, dean of adult education for Pima Community College, said it is not clear how the schools will verify the students' legal status, but that verification will probably be a huge burden on the college if it has to investigate the citizenship status of 80,000 students. All community college and university students will be required to prove their citizenship.

State agencies affected by Prop 300 will be responsible for its enforcement.

In many of Tucson's high schools, graduates who are not citizens are those who most need financial assistance to continue their education. These students are often among the most academically gifted graduates.

BethAnn Johnson, a PCC instructor said, “Proposition 300 would deny access to higher education to successful youth who would contribute to the economic growth of our state...I urge all Arizona voters to consider the destructiveness of this proposition to our communities before voting.”

Many young parents, themselves non-legal residents, need child care assistance in order to work.

People who are given opportunities to live, work and get an education in our community contribute far more economically than they ever take from the community. Denial of these opportunities can result in unemployment, a higher crime rate and illiteracy.

Proposition 300 should be defeated.

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