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Day labor bill could affect Centreville center by Kali Schumitz

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Legislation being considered in the Virginia General Assembly would require staff of the new Centreville Labor Resource Center to check the legal status of people who go there to seek short-term employment. Centreville Del. Tim Hugo (R-Dist. 40) introduced legislation that would require all day labor centers in the state to use the federal E-Verify, an Internet-based system that allows businesses to determine the eligibility of their employees to work in the U.S.

The Centreville Labor Resource Center opened in December following a multi-year effort to solve a community problem of day laborers congregating on sidewalks near a shopping center entrance in Centreville.

Workers register with the center and agree to a code of conduct. Available work is distributed through a lottery system, and the center also offers skills training and English classes.

Employers coming to hire laborers at the center fill out a form that states where the worker will be going for the day, and what is the agreed-upon pay for the task.

The center has been successful at bringing in workers off the street, said director Shani Moser. Implementing the E-Verify program could send some laborers back to the street corner, she said.

The center does have general community support, she added.

"There have been a lot of people happy with the professionalism," she said. "They don't like the uncivilized manner, with people jumping on top of cars, practically, to try and get work."

County Supervisor Michael Frey (R-Sully) supported the labor center as a solution to a community problem, despite concerns about federal immigration policy.

He recently learned of Hugo's bill, and said he wishes the delegate had talked to him before introducing it.

"If it passes, we'll deal with it," he said.

Hugo did not return calls seeking comment on his legislation before the Times print deadline.

As of press time, the bill still was in the House Commerce and Labor Committee. The committee meets on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

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