

# Immigration T-Shirt Spat at Maryland Mall

**UPDATE:** *The mall owner issued a statement saying it will not insist the store stop selling the shirts: "The letter in question was sent in error and does not reflect the views of the Mall's owner, Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust ("PREIT"). PREIT welcomes a diversity of views and encourages our tenants to sell goods that meet the demands of our shoppers."*

Maryland is in the midst of a debate over whether to follow Arizona in adopting a strict new law on illegal immigration. One thing that shouldn't be up for debate is whether it is OK to express an opinion about whether such a law would be a good idea.

But the management of Francis Scott Key Mall in Frederick isn't so sure. According to the Frederick News-Post, mall owner Pennsylvania Real Estate Investment Trust has asked the owner of the Antietam Gallery custom framing gallery to stop selling "Maryland Stands With Arizona" T-shirts out of his shop.

In a letter to gallery owner James Kehoe, the management cites a rule against "goods with derogatory or offensive political messages," the paper reported. Kehoe, who considers the shirts to be "patriotic," responded not by removing the shirts, but by notifying the media and several local officials.

Kehoe cited a dozen items sold at Spencer Gifts, the place where good taste goes to die, that "contained profane language and sexually oriented messages," the News-Post reported. Kehoe also said Spencer Gifts is selling a shirt "with a derogatory message aimed specifically at illegal immigrants."

Immigration is a complex issue. Many come to the United States illegally out of desperation, risking a journey that is fatal for some, and taking the least desirable jobs at the lowest pay if they make it.

But nations have the right and the obligation to set limits on immigration -- those of Mexico are much harsher than those of the U.S. -- and those who have come to the U.S. through legal means are right to be angry by the millions who broke the law to get here.

What is not a complex issue is whether we have a right to talk about it. The mall managers and others who would take offense at Kehoe's shirts may not like restricting entry into the U.S., but they have a very odd idea about what that same country is all about.

“It’s not about the T-shirt,” Kehoe told the News-Post. “It’s about people being victimized by political correctness and people feeling they are not able to speak the truth about things.”

People who run a mall named after the man who wrote the national anthem should understand that.

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