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Hispanic groups ask businessman to stop selling IDs

Loyo defends service as legitimate

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A south side businessman who sells various forms of identification to foreign-born residents said he intends to continue offering his services after a meeting in which representatives of community groups, Mitchell Bank and the Mexican consulate asked him to stop.

Hugo Loyo, who runs Credenciales USA at 3031 W. Lincoln Ave., had been asked to stop advertising for “Identification Americana” and “Licencia Internacional de Conducir” (or American identification and international driver’s licenses).

“Advertisements by Credenciales USA claim or imply that the identification cards they sell are acceptable to open bank accounts, board an airplane, register plates, obtain vehicle license plates, when in fact they are not,” said Steve Fendt, executive director of the Southside Organizing Committee, in a letter to Loyo.

“We want to make sure that members of the community who are worried because they do not have state identification cards do not go out and spend their hard-earned money to purchase identification documents which have no value,” he said.

But Loyo, who met with the organizing committee, Voces de la Frontera and others on Saturday, said this week, “I don’t do anything illegal, and they have no legal reason to stop me.”

He said, however, that he would have his attorneys review his advertising to make sure it’s not misleading or illegal.

“We do not believe it’s ethical,” said Christine Neumann-Ortiz, director of Voces de la Frontera, one of the groups that met with Loyo. These identifications give people “a false sense of security,” she said. Since April, new state laws require a person to show legal proof of status before getting a driver’s license.

Lino Santacruz, a press attaché for the Mexican consulate office in Chicago, said the consulate has received

questions about identifications produced by Credenciales. It's not a government-issued ID, he said.

Jackie Martinez, of Mitchell Bank, said her bank and several others aren't accepting the identifications from Credenciales because the credibility is unknown.

The firm advertises on Spanish-language radio, WDDW-FM (104.7), and in the print media.

"We're not taking advantage of people," said Loyo. "We don't fake anything. We help people get international driver's licenses and provide a second form of ID. It's not an official ID."

He compared it to a school or work identification. He added that the ID states that it's not a government-issued identification.

Loyo said he started providing identifications last year when the new state driver's license and ID laws took effect. "We thought we could help the community," he said. His firm charges \$100 for an international driver's license and \$30 for the general ID, he said.

But Neumann-Ortiz said she's been told the IDs are selling for \$200 or more. "People aren't buying what they think they're buying," she said.

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