

Arizona's New Immigration Law: A Step in the Wrong Direction

by Jerry Grzeca and John Sesini
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The outrage over Arizona's controversial Senate Bill 1070 is sweeping the nation. SB1070, the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe

Neighborhoods Act, requires police officers to check individuals for proof of legal immigration status if they suspect that someone may be an undocumented immigrant. It gives local law enforcement agencies, as well as federal immigration law enforcement, the authority to interrogate and even detain people if there is a "reasonable suspicion" that they are in the country illegally.

Although the law was amended so that police may not use race, ethnicity or national origin as a factor when deciding to question someone about immigration status, opposition to SB1070 stems from concern that the law will open the floodgates to racial profiling and abuses of civil liberties. This opposition has extended to law enforcement officers, legal experts and even Republican leaders in other states with large immigrant populations. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush notes, "I think it creates unintended consequences. It's difficult for me to imagine how you're going to enforce this law. It places a significant burden on local law enforcement and you have civil liberties issues that are significant as well." California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger adds that Arizona's approach is "as unconscionable as it is unconstitutional," and vows to pull California's state pension funds invested in Arizona.

Despite opposition to this bill, a new report by the Immigration Policy Center reveals that SB1070 is the latest in a long line of efforts to regulate immigration at the state level. Twelve states - Arkansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and Utah - have introduced or are considering introducing similar legislation.

In Wisconsin, similar immigration enforcement laws could be introduced sooner than we think, especially if a neighboring state such as Minnesota is considering this legislation. Wisconsin has a significant Hispanic population in the Milwaukee, Madison, Racine, Kenosha, and Fox Valley areas, who greatly contribute to our economy in general. Wisconsin's agriculture business is

heavily dependent upon immigrant workers from Mexico, and if we were to enact laws similar to that of SB1070, we could lose a large percentage of our agricultural workforce.

In addition to our agriculture industry, several Milwaukee area businesses, including Fortune 500 companies, are dependent upon immigrant

workers. If Wisconsin decides to pass similar legislation, we may see a decline in the number of skilled workers who want to stay in our state. Workers may gravitate



towards states with a more welcoming demeanor, which will negatively impact Wisconsin. This enforcement-only approach may force many local businesses to shut down, which in turn will impact our already struggling housing and consumer markets as workers move out of our state and take their discretionary income elsewhere.

Another potential unintentional consequence of SB1070 for Wisconsin and other states is its impact on crime; similar laws may actually increase the rate of violent crimes. Since SB1070 requires police officers responding to any city ordinance violation to automatically determine the immigration status of the individual if they have reasonable suspicion that he or she is an undocumented immigrant, many local violations will not be reported. In fear of detainment or deportation, immigrants who witness minor and even major crimes may not report such crimes to local law enforcement for fear that they may be detained. Furthermore, police resources will be diverted away from more serious matters.

If Wisconsin or any other U.S. state decides to take an enforcement-only approach to immigration law similar to SB1070, our country can expect to see economic losses, loss of civil liberties, racial profiling and an increase in crime. SB1070 is not the answer to immigration reform. What we need is legislation that will help the United States move forward as a nation of immigrants, not backwards to a time of racial profiling and discrimination.

For more information on SB1070 or other immigration issues, please contact Grzeca Law Group at (414) 342-3000 or visit our website at www.grzecalaw.com.

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