

Alabama's Dangerous New Anti-Immigrant Law

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Washington D.C. - Yesterday, Judge Sharon Blackburn failed to enjoin major portions of Alabama's extreme anti-immigrant law, HB 56, leaving many dangerous sections open to implementation. Local police, for example, are required to act as federal immigration enforcement agents by demanding proof of legal status from anyone who appears to be foreign. Other provisions—that go further than Arizona's law—insist public school administrators check the legal status of students and their parents and create confusing and burdensome new restrictions on contracts between the state government and immigrants and between private citizens and immigrants. It's unclear how far the restrictions on contracts will go, but at a minimum they will limit access to housing and utilities for anyone who cannot produce the proper documentation.

Although supporters claim the law will solve the state's economic problems and reduce crime, HB 56 will inflict greater economic damage to Alabama, costing the state millions to implement and defend. And the crime argument simply doesn't hold water. Since 1990, Alabama's unauthorized population has [risen](#) [1] from five thousand to 120 thousand. Yet the violent crime [rate](#) [2] in the state has fallen by more than a third. Restrictive immigration laws have proven to reduce, not maximize, law enforcement effectiveness.

These kinds of laws also tend to have a chilling effect on state businesses that depend heavily on foreign talent and investments, such as Alabama's automotive and emerging biotechnology and aerospace industries. The Korean automaker Hyundai, for example, has brought thousands of [jobs](#) [3] to Montgomery. The German company ThyssenKrupp has [built](#) [3] a \$3.7 billion steel mill north of Mobile, Alabama, that will employ 2,700 workers when it is running at full capacity. HB 56 sends a clear and decidedly un-American message that many of these foreign workers who live and work in Alabama are illegal until proven legal; guilty until proven innocent.

Meanwhile, Alabama's law enforcement agencies are struggling to fulfill current mandates in tough fiscal times. The additional burdens imposed by this law will hurt, not help, in fighting crime. [Reports](#) [4] show the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office has already cut 20 percent or more of its budget this year, eliminating 145 deputy positions in order to make up the \$3 million missing in this quarter's budget. According to Tuscaloosa (AL) Police Chief [Steve Anderson](#) [5], the new law will [require](#) [5] officers to spend more time on basic traffic stops, not to mention potential court appearances, taking time away from solving real crimes and protecting communities.

Local schools and administrators will also have to bear the burden of enforcing Alabama's draconian immigration law. The Principal of Crossville Elementary School in northeastern Alabama [reportedly](#) [6] said, "We don't have the personnel to do all the work that is needed to find out which parents are legal. That's my biggest concern—putting it off on the schools to police illegal immigration. I don't think school is the place to do that; we don't have the resources."

Alabama has just entered dangerous new territory and, in the process, dragged the rest of the country along for the ride. [Those](#) [7] out-of-state politicians and organizations behind these state-level experiments with immigration policy will not lose anything more than a court battle. Sadly, it's the people of Alabama—being used by anti-immigrant crusaders—who have the most to lose.

For a legal analysis of yesterday's court ruling see:

- [What You Should Know About Initial Rulings on Alabama's Immigration Law](#) [8] (ImmigrationImpact.com, September 29, 2011)

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For more information contact Wendy Sefsaf at wsefsaf@immcouncil.org [9] or 202-507-7524.

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