

Turning Off the Water: How the Contracting and Transaction Provisions in Alabama's Immigration Law Make Life Harder



[1] **Turning Off the Water: How the Contracting and Transaction Provisions in Alabama's Immigration Law Make Life Harder For Everyone**

By [Joan Friedland](#) [2]

Since passage of HB 56, Alabama's extreme new immigration law, many are aware of the most immediate consequences of the law—rotting tomatoes, racial profiling, and frightened school children. However, two provisions of the law that have the potential to be extremely damaging to the state's economy, rule of law, and municipal functioning have received comparatively little attention. These two provisions have been in effect since September 30, 2011, and are likely to result in an increase of exploitation of workers, erosion of fundamental legal protections, and denial of access to state and local government services and activities. In other words, these provisions will undoubtedly impact the daily lives of all Alabamians.

One provision denies unauthorized immigrants access to the courts to enforce contracts and another makes it a felony for unauthorized immigrants to even attempt to conduct business transactions with state or local governments. While this may sound like innocuous legalese, the fact is that these two provisions affect nearly every aspect of normal daily life. These provisions go well beyond Arizona's SB1070 and attempt to further tighten the clamp on immigrant workers and their families, while also punishing Alabamians as they go about many aspects of their daily lives. Activities which had never been considered relevant to immigration law—such as having safe water, a place to live, and access to basic government functions—are made much more difficult, if not impossible, by this new law. And the impact of these extreme provisions will touch all Alabamians, not just unauthorized immigrants. There are serious implications for public health and safety, and there is a likelihood that state bureaucrats will make costly mistakes and violate the civil rights of many U.S. citizens and lawfully present immigrants.

This paper provides an analysis of Sections 27 and 30 of HB 56, which regulate contracts and business transactions. This unprecedented reach of state bureaucracy into the lives of Alabamians in the name of immigration policy must be called to attention and questioned.

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