

Rounding up reactions to the Supreme Court hearing on Arizona immigration crackdown

Published on Thu, Apr 26, 2012

The Supreme Court of the United States, which heard arguments in the lawsuit against Arizona's immigration enforcement law Wednesday, will not issue its decision until June, but opponents and supporters continue to argue the merits of the state's crackdown.

The court heard arguments on the legality of only four provisions contained in the Arizona law, known as S.B. 1070. Analysts on both side of this issue say the court's eventual decision will affect the future of immigration laws across the U.S.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform, which supports the Arizona law, writes that the four provisions (.pdf) make it a state crime to violate federal immigration law, authorizes warrantless arrests and prohibits undocumented immigrants from working or looking for work in Arizona.

According to WCTV news in Tallahassee, "Florida's Attorney General [Pam Bondi] joined the case, urging the nation's high court to let states detain suspected immigrants."

Which way will the Supreme Court's decision go? Several news organizations have reported that approval of some of S.B. 1070's provisions seems possible.

"Bucking the Obama administration, Supreme Court justices seemed to find little trouble Wednesday with major parts of Arizona's tough immigration law that require police to check the legal status of people they stop for other reasons," Bloomberg reported, adding that "the fate of other provisions that make Arizona state crimes out of immigration violations was unclear in the court's final argument of the term."

According to Politico, "at oral arguments Wednesday over Arizona's law cracking down on illegal immigrants, both conservative and liberal justices expressed deep skepticism about the federal government's case against the core of the law: a provision requiring local law enforcement to check the immigration status of people arrested or even detained briefly for a traffic violation if they're suspected of being in the country illegally."

"The federal government got beat up today in the Supreme Court and if the Justices' line of questioning is any sign, at least parts of Arizona's SB 1070 are likely to stand," Colorlines reported Wednesday.

The Immigration Policy Center points out that "the only question before the Justices was whether federal immigration laws 'preempt' four provisions of SB 1070 that were blocked by lower courts." The Policy Center concludes that "the Justices' questions made clear that even if part or all of the Arizona law is not preempted by federal statutes, it may be impossible to apply in practice without violating individuals' constitutional rights. Given the demonstrated policy drawbacks of state immigration enforcement laws, it remains possible that other states will decline to enact copycat measures in the future."

Carlos Garcia of Puente Arizona, an immigrant advocate organization that led nationwide actions to protest S.B. 1070, wrote Wednesday that "1070 is a symptom of a much larger problem, and it's one that has been made worse by President Obama's own immigration policies that use people like Sheriff Joe Arpaio as 'force multipliers.' The spin around today's Supreme Court spectacle masks the fact that the Department of Homeland Security continues to advance programs that criminalize immigrants, and the Department of Justice has still failed in its duty to remedy civil rights violations it has merely described for three years."

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Published on Immigration Policy Center (<http://immigrationpolicy.org>)

Published in the The Florida Independent

Source URL:

<http://immigrationpolicy.org/newsroom/clip/rounding-reactions-supreme-court-hearing-arizona-immigration-crackdown>