



## Beyond Arizona

Without Comprehensive Immigration Reform,  
Intolerance Will Rise Across Our Country

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Gebe Martinez May 2010

Center for American Progress



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# Introduction and summary

For years now, the temperature in Arizona has been rising, not from the punishing arid desert heat but from the increasing political intolerance of the state's immigrant population. A new boiling point was reached last month when Gov. Jan Brewer signed a law requiring police to investigate, detain, and arrest people if they sense immigration violations.

The implications of Arizona's S.B.1070 are startling. Racial profiling of suspects will increase and legal residents could face detention if they are stopped by a police officer and do not have in hand valid identification such as their birth certificates or passports. It is the most severe immigration enforcement law enacted by any state since 1994, when California voters approved Proposition 187, a measure that proposed denying education, nonemergency health care, and other public services to undocumented immigrants. A federal court subsequently ruled the proposition was unconstitutional because it trampled on the federal government's exclusive jurisdiction over immigration matters. Similar serious legal questions are being raised over Arizona's attempt to criminalize illegal presence in the state given the federal government's control over immigration law and policy.

Contrary to the title of Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, S.B.1070, law enforcement groups including the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police oppose the measure. The reason: It will seriously hinder community policing efforts that rely on residents cooperating with police, not hiding from them.

Arizona's governor and lawmakers do not want undocumented immigrants to hide. They want them out. The law states the intent is "to make attrition through enforcement the public policy of all state and local government agencies in Arizona... and deter the unlawful entry and presence of aliens and economic activity by persons unlawfully present in the United States."

Angry in tone, the measure was born out of fear and frustration with the federal government's inability to manage its broken immigration system. Citizens across the country, but especially along the southern border, increasingly believe that rising crime rates are due to growing undocumented immigrant populations—even though federal crime statistics at the end of last year showed a drop in violent crime in major cities along the U.S.-Mexico border and undocumented immigrant entries into the United States fell in recent years due to the economic recession and tighter border security.

This frustration was clearly evident in a recent Wall Street Journal/NBC News public opinion poll. Almost two-thirds of all the adults polled supported the provisions contained in SB 1070. The poll underscores the rising frustration across the country over the lack of action in Washington on immigration. Rather expectedly, the population that would most likely be targeted by the new law or feel its effects, Latino adults, oppose it by 70 percent. Before Arizona enacted this immigration control measure, numerous polls showed the public favoring a comprehensive immigration reform solution.

But there also is a strong strain of anti-immigrant nativism driving the campaign for laws such as Arizona S.B.1070. Listen to Arizona State Sen. Russell Pearce, the Republican who sponsored the new state law and whose son, a sheriff's deputy, was seriously injured by a criminal who was an undocumented immigrant. In a 2008 interview with National Public Radio, Sen. Pearce declared:

*I will not back off until we solve the problem of this illegal invasion. Invaders, that's what they are. Invaders on the American sovereignty and it can't be tolerated.*

Sen. Pearce's impatience is palpable in many communities in our country, enabling restrictionists to play on misplaced public fears in order to enact new state and local ordinances to control undocumented immigration. What is happening in Arizona is an example of the political, economic, and moral upheaval that stems from a lack of leadership in Congress to enact badly needed comprehensive immigration reforms. The public demands that the system be fixed and would support comprehensive immigration reform if it were an option.

Instead of mustering the political will to overhaul the immigration system, Congress has thrown money at the problem in recent years, increasing spending on border protection and immigration enforcement by almost 80 percent from fiscal year 2005 to fiscal year 2010, from \$9.5 billion to \$17.1 billion. Dissatisfied immigration restrictionists in Arizona and other states nonetheless push for the draconian measures contained in S.B.1070—requiring action at the state and local level that is probably unconstitutional, because they appear to conflict with the federal government's immigration authority.

But the restrictionists press on, seeking the legislative equivalent of a tourniquet to stop the flow of immigrants—legal and illegal—into the United States. Generally, these laws fall into seven categories:

- Restricting immigrants' access to public benefits and services
- Requiring employers to verify a person's legal status before becoming eligible for employment
- Outlawing areas where day laborers can gather
- Establishing "English-only" policies
- Mandating that landlords check the legal status of their tenants
- Requiring state and local police to enforce immigration laws
- Restricting immigrants' access to driver's licenses

Now, Arizona's S.B.1070 pushes law enforcers even further by forcing them to determine what an undocumented immigrant looks like in order to enforce immigration law. Not satisfied with the extent of this new law, some conservative politicians in states with lower immigrant populations—Texas being an exception—are fanning the flames with fiery political rhetoric, vowing to follow Arizona's lead. But the broader national political response has rejected the severe tactics.

In Texas, Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo, a Cuban immigrant, says Arizona created “an environment where U.S. citizens and legal residents will be treated as criminals by law enforcement personnel based primarily upon the color of their skin.” And Gov. Rick Perry, a Republican up for re-election this year, says he did not think the Arizona law would take Texas “in the right direction.”

Nationwide reaction to the S.B.1070 is similar, though more pointed. The Major League Baseball Players Association, whose roster include players on 15 teams that conduct spring training in Arizona, stands squarely against the new law, and Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig is facing public pressure to move the 2011 All-Star Game from Phoenix, just one example of the economic boycotts against Arizona being called for by immigrant advocacy groups and even other cities. Indeed, Phoenix's National Basketball Association franchise, the Suns, changed their name on Cinco de Mayo to “Los Suns.” Their playoff opponent, the San Antonio Spurs, attempted to follow suit, but their Spanish-language jerseys were not ready before game time in Phoenix.

Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon is as worried about the economic consequences of the new law as he is about the ethnic strife it may create. The city's convention center has about \$90 million in future revenues it now fears losing because of S.B. 1070. Already, numerous groups, including the National Association of Black Accountants and the International Communications Association have cancelled their planned meetings in Phoenix.

Faith leaders also condemn the measure, noting “it goes beyond anti-immigrant sentiments.” The Arizona law “stands as evidence that in 21st Century America, we may no longer be in the Desert of Segregation or the Egypt of Slavery but we just discovered there are Giants to be slain in the land of Promise. The Arizona Law is without a doubt, anti-Latino, anti-family, anti-immigrant, anti-Christian and unconstitutional,” stated the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference.

This raging political firestorm will not end until constitutionally sound federal solutions are in place. This paper examines the rapid rise in state and local immigration enforcement measures that have been implemented in the absence of the needed overhaul of federal immigration law. We review how immigration restrictionists are pushing new laws detrimental to the safety of our communities and in violation of the U.S. Constitution, using any scare tactic available to rally support for their cause. And we will show how legal challenges to the harshest of these new laws are succeeding in federal courts across the country. Finally, we will present once more the compelling case for comprehensive immigration reform, which would put an end to these restrictionist efforts and restore our nation's legal immigrant heritage.

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# How we got here: The road from Proposition 187 to S.B. 1070

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## California

The conditions in California in 1994 were similar to what exists in many parts of the country today. The state was gripped by an economic recession. The Latino population increased at a rate faster than what the nativists' psyche could absorb—up to 26 percent from 19 percent a decade earlier. Immigrants, especially those without documents, were being blamed for everything that was wrong in the state: crime, unemployment, high taxes being assessed for service delivery to the poor, the elderly, and immigrants.

Frustration with the rising presence of immigrants in California produced Proposition 187, called “Save Our State,” which denied most public benefits including education and nonemergency health care to undocumented immigrants. Then-Gov. Pete Wilson, a Republican, embraced the proposition as part of his re-election campaign. Newsletters by proposition leaders were beyond harsh, charging that illegal immigrants were responsible for the “stench of urination, defecation, narcotics, savagery and death.”

Californians approved the measure by 59 percent to 41 percent—and re-elected Wilson—although Latino voters overwhelmingly rejected the referendum, 73 percent to 27 percent. A federal judge later found the ballot referendum unconstitutional because it conflicted with federal immigration authority. State officials dropped the legal appeal.

Republicans suffered a political backlash at the hands of California's Hispanic voters who were angered by the passage of Proposition 187. Except for the election of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger in 2003, no Republican has won a statewide election in California since Proposition 187. Gov. Schwarzenegger entered office as a supporter of the proposition, but he now is an outspoken advocate of comprehensive immigration reform, recently vowing he would never approve of a law like Arizona's S.B.1070.

Opponents of immigrants in California and in more conservative states and cities did not give up, however. Instead, they found sponsors for immigration enforcement measures that chipped away at undocumented immigrants' rights and services. Court defeats were turned into lessons to be applied to the next legislative draft.

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## The federal response

The federal government, meanwhile, did not turn a deaf ear to the anti-immigrant political rhetoric. In 1996, two years after California's Proposition 187 was approved by voters, President Bill Clinton signed a welfare reform law that conditioned eligibility on U.S. citizenship, thereby taking benefits away from legal immigrants and illegal immigrants alike. But the roar of criticism forced Congress to return to the law and restore some benefits to legal immigrants, including children, elderly, and disabled who were in the United States before 1996.

In 1996, the federal government also opened the door to local immigration enforcement by contracting with state and other local jurisdictions on a voluntary basis to police immigration under the Section 287(g) of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. This contractual authority took on greater significance after the terrorist attacks in September 2001, when the newly created U.S. Department of Homeland Security was assigned jurisdiction of terrorism investigations, immigration investigation and control, emergency management, and other functions. The DHS began entering into contracts with local and state law enforcement agencies to carry out limited immigration enforcement, initially in the name of fighting global terrorism.

But over the years, rogue county sheriffs corrupted the powers assigned to them by the federal government. Recently federal auditors questioned the program's effectiveness while immigrant and human rights advocates called for its termination because several local law enforcers are abusing their power and arresting immigrants based on racial profiling.

With the political demand for immigration controls heating up, Congress passed the REAL ID Act in 2005, which imposed higher burdens and stricter standards of proof for individuals applying for asylum. The law also placed new restrictions on state-issued driver's licenses and other identification documents.

At the same time, the U.S. House of Representatives passed an anti-immigrant bill introduced by then-House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI). The bill, H.R. 4437, called for making unlawful presence in the United States a felony crime and sought to punish acts of charity by church members, the medical community, or family and friends who provided assistance to an undocumented immigrant. The law was so abrasive it provoked more than 1 million protesters to march on the streets of major cities across the nation and stained Republicans as intolerant nativists.

That same year, the Senate passed a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill sponsored by Sens. John McCain (R-AZ) and Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA). This comprehensive immigration bill tightened border security, proposed tougher sanctions against employers, and revamped the visa system for workers and family reunification. If the bill had been enacted, it would have created a tough legalization path for about 10 million of the 12 million undocumented immigrants in the United States at that time.

The Senate's bipartisan measure received an impressive 23 votes from Republicans. But the Republican-led House refused to take up the bill and reconcile it with their restrictionist Sensenbrenner measure as time ran out on the legislative session. The Senate tried again in 2007, but with less success. Congress instead focused on cosmetic fixes such as the proposed 700-mile fence along a 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border, which has proven to be an ineffective deterrent against illegal border crossings.

But Republicans suffered a political backlash, especially among the growing Latino electorate that felt the sting of the Sensenbrenner bill. Beginning with the 2006 elections, the Republican Party split between social conservatives who opposed comprehensive immigration reform and the more pragmatic business sector that wanted an expanded visa system. This dispute turned off Hispanic voters. The result was especially noticeable in the 2008 presidential election, when GOP presidential nominee John McCain received only 31 percent of the Hispanic vote, compared to 44 percent of the vote President George W. Bush received in 2004.

As Congress bobbled opportunities to pass comprehensive immigration reform bills, state and local governments were not willing to wait for federal enforcement. In 2005, more than 150 anti-immigrant measures were introduced in 30 states, though few of them became law. The number of measures peaked in 2007, when 1,562 bills were introduced and 240 laws were enacted, before dropping off slightly the following two years. Then, in the first quarter of 2010 there was a dramatic jump, with 34 state legislatures rushing to pass 107 laws, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Among the most active anti-immigrant states was Arizona. Immigration hardliners who years earlier were energized by California's passage of Proposition 187 found they had to travel only to the state next door to plant their flag and claim new legal territory on the issue of immigration control and enforcement.

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## Arizona

Years before diving into the immigration control movement, the Grand Canyon state already was deeply divided on the larger issue of multiculturalism. In 1990, 56 percent of Arizona voters rejected observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day in honor of the slain civil rights leader, prompting the National Football League to move Super Bowl XXVII from Arizona to California in 1993. After the state voted to recognize MLK Day as a holiday, the state has hosted two Superbowls.

But at the start of this century, Arizona's conservative political culture became a target for restrictionists looking to seal the border and deny government benefits to undocumented immigrants as the state registered the highest rate of undocumented border crossings and a high illegal immigrant population. In 2000, there were 330,000 undocumented immigrants in the state, compared to 460,000 in 2009—a 42 percent increase.

A major turning point in Arizona came in November 2004, when the state’s voters approved Proposition 200, “Protect Arizona Now,” the first law in the nation that sought to deny undocumented immigrants’ access to “public benefits,” required proof of citizenship before voting, and mandated that government workers turn over suspected undocumented immigrants to authorities or face jail terms and fines. Major backing for the proposition came from the Federation for American Immigration Reform, or FAIR, which is listed as a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The legal challenges to Arizona Proposition 200 included an argument over the term “public benefits” since the sponsors intended to cut off welfare benefits. The problem was, welfare programs such as food stamps and the school lunch program are federally funded. The constitutionality of Proposition 200 is now pending before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Two years after the passage of Proposition 200, in November 2006, at least 70 percent of Arizona voters approved four propositions that passed legal muster, including Proposition 300, which banned non-U.S. citizens and undocumented residents from being eligible for in-state tuition status or financial aid that is funded or subsidized by state tax dollars. During the law’s first year, 1,500 students from Arizona State University and the University of Arizona and almost 1,800 community college students were denied financial aid or in-state tuition status. The other three successful propositions in 2006 denied bail to undocumented immigrants, kept them from collecting punitive damages in lawsuits, and established English as the state’s official language.

The Republican-led Arizona legislature passed other immigration measures in 2006 and 2007, but then-Gov. Janet Napolitano, a Democrat, vetoed many of them, including a bill that was similar to the current S.B.1070. But she signed a 2007 bill with bipartisan support that heavily penalized employers who hire undocumented workers. The state’s employer sanctions law may become the first case in which the U.S. Supreme Court tests the constitutionality of local and state immigration enforcement measures. The high court has asked the Obama administration to file a brief stating its position in this case.

Napolitano’s move from the Arizona governor’s office to the Department of Homeland Security in 2009 created new political opportunities for restrictionists to get their measures signed by the new Republican governor. Under the bright lights of the dozens of television cameras assembled before her, Gov. Brewer ceremoniously signed S.B. 1070, which makes it a misdemeanor crime for an immigrant to be in Arizona without carrying legal documents. It also increases state and local law enforcement of federal immigration laws and penalizes persons who shelter, hire, or transport undocumented immigrants. In an effort to preempt constitutional challenges to the law, the state legislature quickly enacted amendments that watered down the most blatantly unconstitutional racial profiling provisions.

Playing to the fears that have been hyped up by inaccurate reporting about violence on the Mexican side of the border, Gov. Brewer also blamed Washington for the need to sign S.B.1070. “We cannot delay while the destruction happening south of our international

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border creeps its way north,” [said Gov. Brewer](#). “We in Arizona have been more than patient waiting for Washington to act. But decades of federal inaction and misguided policy have created a dangerous and unacceptable situation.” Still, this new law will be tied up in costly legal challenges for years to come.

While the state legislature was advancing immigration control measures, Gov. Napolitano was focusing on the rising number of immigrants in detention. She negotiated a so-called 287(g) contract (see [box](#)) to allow state prison guards to carry out civil deportation proceedings. That led to a second agreement with the federal government to extend those duties to the state’s street and highway officers in the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

By the end of 2006, 287(g) contracts were in place in state and county law enforcement agencies in Florida, Alabama, California, Arizona, and North Carolina—[agreements that](#) outlined the DHS’s supervisory role and individual law enforcement agencies’ jurisdictions and limitations. In January 2007, the Bush administration granted a wide-ranging 287(g) contract to Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, a noted restrictionist, aligned with Russell Pearce, the state legislator. Arpaio invited the news media to watch his random street raids, which arrested Hispanics without probable cause, opening the floodgates to racial profiling in Arizona.

Arpaio is now under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice for possible civil rights violations and abuse of power. He also has been named [in thousands of lawsuits](#) alleging abuse and mistreatment, costing Maricopa County at least \$43 million to defend. Napolitano, who now serves as President Barack Obama’s Department of Homeland Security secretary, is assessing how to reassert federal authority over the 287(g) contracts, while immigrants’ advocates are calling for the program’s termination.

## Trying to get around the U.S. Constitution

### The growth of 287(g) contracts and the loss of civil rights

The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) of 1996 added Section 287(g), which authorizes the secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to enter into agreements with state and local law enforcement agencies, permitting designated officers to perform immigration law enforcement functions, pursuant to a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), provided that the local law enforcement officers receive appropriate training and function under the supervision of sworn U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers.

Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

# Beyond Arizona

The number of state and local immigration control laws are on the rise across the United States, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. Specifically:

- In 2006, 570 bills were introduced, 84 laws were enacted, and 12 resolutions adopted.
- In 2007, 1,562 bills were introduced, 240 laws were enacted, and 50 resolutions adopted.
- In 2008, 1,305 bills were introduced, 206 laws were enacted, and 64 resolutions adopted.
- In 2009, more than 1,500 bills were introduced, 222 laws were enacted, and 131 resolutions adopted.

Some of the high-profile actions outside of Arizona have occurred in Oklahoma as well as Hazleton, Pennsylvania; Farmers Branch, Texas; and Prince William County, Virginia. Specifically:

- In Oklahoma, H.B.1804 makes undocumented immigrants ineligible for most public assistance. It also makes it a felony to shelter, employ, or transport an undocumented person for commercial purposes and bans them from obtaining a driver's license or other state identification cards. Immigration restrictionists are also pushing Oklahoma to challenge the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which grants citizenship to any person born in the United States.
- In Hazleton, Pennsylvania, the municipal government enacted in 2006 an ordinance that banned employers and landlords from hiring or renting housing to anyone the city classified as an "illegal alien." The American Civil Liberties Union led a successful legal challenge against the law.
- In Farmers Branch, a suburb of Dallas, Texas, the municipal government passed an ordinance requiring landlords to verify the legal status of tenants, and subjecting landlords to fines of \$500 for each day they are in violation of the law. The city is appealing a federal court ruling striking down the ordinance, but city officials have complained about legal fees charged by its legal team, which total more than \$3 million to date.
- In 2007, Prince William County, Virginia, approved an ordinance that required police to check the status of detainees they suspected of being undocumented immigrants. Amid the vocal protestors was the police chief, who argued that enforcement of the law would

be a burden on local taxpayers, lead to charges of racism and racial profiling, and be detrimental to the community policing program. The ordinance, facing the legal challenge that it was unconstitutional, was amended in 2008, with police now required to determine the legal status of all criminal suspects in their custody.

But these four examples are just the tip of the iceberg (see map).

In the wake of Arizona's most recent restrictionist action, conservative state lawmakers in 16 states are considering whether to copy the Arizona law. Some of the states include Utah, Oklahoma, Ohio, Missouri, Georgia, South Carolina, Maryland, and Texas, although some states are nearing the end of their legislative sessions and may have to wait until next year to consider new measures.

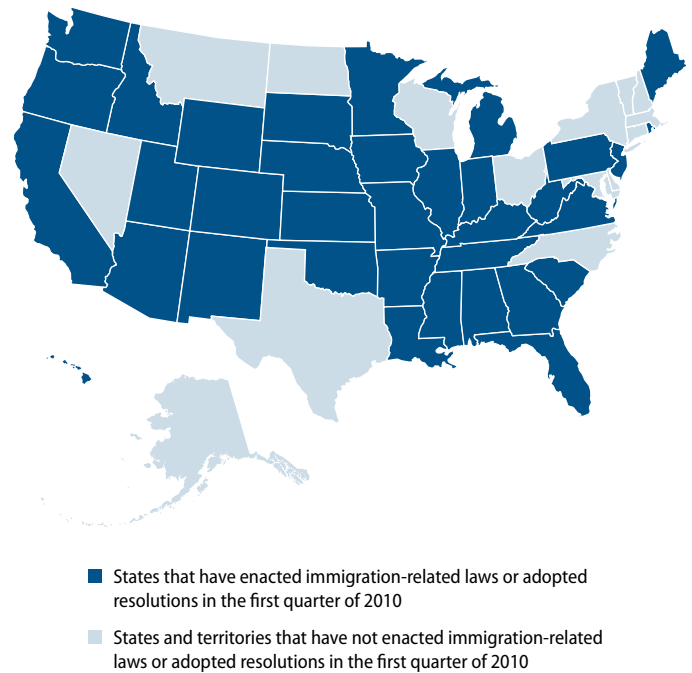
In Texas, however, restrictionists are not finding eager allies among traditional hard-line conservatives. Case in point: Gov. Rick Perry, a Republican up for re-election this year, says he did not think the Arizona law would take Texas "in the right direction."

Conversely, the increased focus on immigration created by the Arizona law is forcing the frontrunner in California's GOP gubernatorial primary, Meg Whitman, to address the issue she wants to avoid while her primary opponent, Steve Poizner, is focused squarely on immigration control. In a stunning political move, Whitman, who supports comprehensive immigration reform, turned to former Gov. Pete Wilson, the godfather of the state's Proposition 187, for support on immigration. In a new radio spot, Wilson states: "I know how important it is to stop illegal immigration, and I know Meg Whitman. Meg will be tough as nails on illegal immigration."

And in Florida's U.S. Senate race, Republican Marco Rubio at first said he was afraid S.B.1070 would "unreasonably single out people who are here legally," but changed his mind once conservative support for the new law became clear. Florida Gov. Charlie Crist, who dropped out of the GOP primary to run as an independent in the Senate race, and Democratic Rep. Kendrick Meek, who also is seeking the Senate seat, have a history of supporting comprehensive immigration reform.

## The spread of restrictionist immigration laws

States and immigrant-related laws



Source: National Conference of State Legislatures.

Not all legislative actions in recent years have negatively targeted undocumented immigrants. In New Haven, Connecticut, the city decided in 2007 to issue identification cards that could be used by all residents, including undocumented immigrants, and could be presented to police, at banks, or for use of city services such as parking meters. Though highly controversial at the time, city officials enacted the measure to integrate undocumented immigrants in the community and to encourage cooperation with city police. The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston said the so-called “Elm City Resident Card” had met its goals one year after enactment. Hartford, Connecticut, followed with an ordinance that prohibits government employees from asking a person’s legal status.

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## Legal challenges to watch

Proponents of strict immigration control measures defend their proposals in court, taking the outcomes and applying the legal arguments to subsequent laws being drafted, all the while trying to pierce the constitutional armor that protects the federal government’s jurisdiction in immigration matters. There are several key cases winding their way up the federal appellate courts system, among them:

- U.S. Supreme Court: *Chamber of Commerce of the United States et al. v. Candelaria* stems from Arizona’s 2007 employer sanctions law, which created a state-level immigrant employment verification requirement. The court is waiting for the U.S. Solicitor General Elena Kagan to submit the Obama administration’s position on the Arizona law. Kagan, of course, has just been nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court by the president, and it is now unclear who will now file the brief, which is due at the end of this month.
- Oklahoma: The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals last month refused to reconsider an earlier decision that struck down two provisions of H.B.1804—one that would ban employers from keeping undocumented workers while firing legal workers, and another that would force employers to increase tax requirements of undocumented workers. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is a leading opponent of the law. One provision of the law remains under appeal.
- Hazleton, Pennsylvania: The case, *Lozano v. Hazleton*, was the first anti-immigrant case to be decided after a full trial. The federal district court’s decision declaring the ordinance unconstitutional has been appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, but no court date has been set.
- Farmer’s Branch, Texas: The city council recently voted to appeal a lower court’s decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, striking down an ordinance similar to the one in Hazleton, Pennsylvania.
- Arizona S.B.1070: Civil rights groups are preparing to challenge the new law, and the U.S. Department of Justice is also considering formally opposing the law in court.

# Conclusion

Congress's failure to enact comprehensive immigration reform has invited cities and states to try to enforce immigration laws even though federal courts have held that the authority to control immigration is vested solely with the federal government.

Many of these laws irresponsibly invite racial profiling and threaten the civil rights of U.S. residents based on their skin color. President Obama was correct when he called the new Arizona law “misguided,” and noted it undermines “basic notions of fairness that we cherish as Americans.”

The patchwork of incongruous state laws will undermine the unitary immigration system that has governed our nation for more than a century. The local upheaval and expected legal, political, and social costs Arizona is now facing should serve as a deterrent for leaders in other states if they are interested in providing leadership and not political pandering.

Congress and the White House also need to heed to the crises occurring in various states and take up comprehensive immigration reform. Comprehensive immigration reform would target employers who do not follow the law, update the visa system to meet employment and family needs, and require undocumented residents to pass background checks, pay taxes, learn English, and go to the back of the line to earn citizenship. Comprehensive immigration reform would also secure our borders so that law enforcement officers can focus their efforts on serious criminals. A working immigration program is vital to our economic and national security, and it upholds our values as a nation.

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## About the author

Gebe Martinez is a Senior Writer and Policy Analyst at the Center for American Progress. Martinez joined American Progress in the fall of 2009 following a 33-year journalism career. Most recently she wrote a column on Hispanic politics and policy for *Politico*, a news group that focuses on Congress, politics, and lobbyists. She also provided news analyses for public affairs programs on all major broadcast networks including PBS and National Public Radio after having watched the ups and downs of both political parties since coming to Washington, D.C. in 1994. She reported on government and politics in Texas and California before working in Washington.

She is a native Texan and a graduate of the University of Texas in Austin, Texas.

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