



CATHOLIC LEGAL IMMIGRATION NETWORK, INC.

Oklahoma's Anti-Immigrant Omnibus Act: Consequences Two Months After Enactment*

On November 1, 2007, Oklahoma's omnibus state immigration act (commonly known as H.B. 1804) came into effect.¹ Last week, a front-page story in USA Today highlighted the effects that the Act has had on the state over the past two months.²

USA Today reported that, "Widespread reports of vanishing employees and schoolchildren suggest thousands of illegal immigrants have left Oklahoma for neighboring states or their native countries." USA Today interviewed people affected by the law, including:

- A nursery owner preparing plants for the winter in eastern Oklahoma when 40 immigrant workers disappeared;
- A restaurant owner who reported that, "I've already had customers who came in here and told me they've fired employees because they didn't know if they were here legally;"
- An immigrant family that has worked in Oklahoma for 10 years who said that, "Since the law went into effect, we are in fear every day;" and
- A Republican state legislator who believes that the law may be "the single most destructive economic disaster since the Dust Bowl."

The newspaper also reported on a proposed bill, currently nicknamed "Son of 1804," that would make English the state's official language and would allow police to seize the property of those who violate the law.

The anti-immigration law's impact on Oklahoma's economy is representative of what other states who have proposed anti-immigrant legislation are seeing.

- In Arizona, which recently enacted anti-immigrant legislation,³ experts expect affected businesses to raise prices or relocate out of state—or out of the country.⁴ Due to the law's restrictions on in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants, more than 3,000 students unable to prove

* The information contained in this document is for general informational purposes only. It is not intended to serve as legal advice and it does not substitute for legal counsel.

¹ The entire Act is available on-line at:

www.sos.state.ok.us/documents/Legislation/51st/2007/1R/HB/1804.pdf. A complete analysis of the Act can be found on CLINIC's website at <http://cliniclegal.org/StateandLocal/OKanalysisfinal.pdf>

² Available at http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2008-01-09-immigcover_N.htm

³ <http://www.azca.com/html/pdf/hb2779c.pdf>

⁴ <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5g1fu5CL0hHcw1r1EbjbZpCU5XREA>

lawful status were denied in-state tuition by Arizona universities and community colleges.⁵

- Colorado reported that its anti-immigrant public benefits law cost \$2 million to implement, but did not lead to any cost-savings.⁶
- The city of Riverside, New Jersey, repealed its anti-immigrant ordinance, but not before hundreds of immigrants moved away, severely impacting the local economy.⁷
- The city of Escondido, California, agreed to rescind its anti-immigrant ordinance as part of a legal settlement. Although the ordinance had never gone into effect, the city had to pay \$90,000 in attorney's fees to the plaintiffs and more than \$100,000 to its own attorneys.⁸

These results on the ground in Oklahoma, Arizona and other states provide important lessons for states and municipalities considering anti-immigrant legislation. The impact of this type of legislation is broad and far-reaching. It does not just affect undocumented immigrants; it affects employers, landlords, small businesses, and schools.

If similar legislation is proposed in your state or if you have questions about the Oklahoma law, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. I can provide legal analysis on proposed legislation and provide an update on what is happening in other states. I can be reached at (202) 756-5523 or hharnett@cliniclegal.org.

For more information on CLINIC's work on state and local anti-immigrant initiatives, please see our website at www.cliniclegal.org/StateandLocal.html.

⁵ <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/0108az-asustudents08-on.html>

⁶ http://www.denverpost.com/ci_5081255

⁷ <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/26/nyregion/26riverside.html?scp=1&sq=towns+rethink+laws+against>

⁸ http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20061214/news_7n14escon.html