



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

Serrano and Peralta Take a Stand Against Arizona's New Immigration Law

JOSÉ M. SERRANO April 28, 2010

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(Albany, NY)- Following the controversial signing in Arizona of the nation's harshest anti-immigration law, Senators José M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx) and Jose Peralta (D-Queens), and their Senate colleagues, held a press conference today to denounce the new law, and to call for immediate, comprehensive immigration reform. SB 1070, which was signed into law by Arizona Governor Jan Brewer, on Friday, April 23rd, requires law enforcement to question people regarding their immigration status and to arrest individuals if there is "reasonable suspicion" that they are in the country illegally.

"Every immigrant family should have the opportunity to undergo the citizenship process in a secure environment," said Senator José M. Serrano, who has been at the forefront of the fight for immigrant rights in his district, and has spearheaded the East Harlem Against Deportation Initiative. "The Arizona law places a divisive wedge between local law enforcement and the immigrant population, and what is more troubling, is that it embraces racial profiling as a tool for harassment. Any law that undermines the civil rights of any particular group is reprehensible and should not be tolerated- especially in a country that once served as a safe haven for those persecuted for their heritage and beliefs."

He continued, "I represent a district with a vibrant and hardworking immigrant population, and have seen the positive effect that immigrants have on our communities and our economy. This regrettable law should serve as a wake-up call for the federal government to act now on the issue of comprehensive immigration reform, so that this oppressive law does not set the tone for immigration laws in New York and throughout the nation."

"As a Dominican American who represents one of the most diverse communities in this country, I find Arizona's SB1070 anti-immigrant, anti-American and unconstitutional," said

Senator Jose Peralta. "This bill does not address comprehensive immigration reform; instead it will restrict civil rights and further marginalize immigrant communities. We cannot allow any governing body in this country to legalize what is nothing short of racial profiling."

"Arizona's new immigration law is unconstitutional and offensive," Senate President Pro Tempore Malcolm A. Smith said. "Requiring law enforcement officials to question individuals about their immigration status based on 'reasonable suspicion' predicated on the color of their skin is outrageous and unacceptable. I have worked long and hard to protect the rights of all people regardless of race, religion or gender and I will add my voice now to oppose this archaic new law."

"I stand in solidarity with the civil rights leaders who oppose Arizona's unconstitutional racial profiling law," said Senator Eric T. Schneiderman (D-Manhattan/Bronx). "Giving local police the power to profile and arrest people who cannot prove their immigration status on demand is as radical as it is irresponsible. This is a wake up call for the federal government to deliver comprehensive immigration reform that will undo this moral, economic and law enforcement disaster, and prevent another state from following Arizona's lead. There is no reason we cannot secure our borders and protect the civil rights of everyone living in this country."

The legislators stressed that the law, which has been criticized by President Barack Obama, underscores the need for federal, state, and local governments to enact immigration policies that will provide a clear path to citizenship, while safeguarding the civil and human rights of families and individuals throughout the country.

Aside from authorizing social profiling, the law also makes it a state crime to not carry immigration papers, and allows people to sue their local government and government

agencies if they believe that immigration laws are not being enforced.

Serrano and Peralta also presented a Senate Resolution, which will be voted on by the Senate, denouncing any policy of profiling in New York State, and urging the federal government to denounce any state-sanctioned immigration policy similar to Arizona's law, which has outraged immigrant's rights groups.

"I'm proud today to join with our state officials in saying: We are New York! We are not Arizona," said Chung-Wha Hong from the New York Immigration Coalition. "Better yet, let's all of us-New Yorkers, Arizonans, Americans, immigrant and native-born- use the debacle that is the Arizona law as a resounding call to step up the pressure on Washington to fix our immigration system. Get out there on May 1st and make sure our leaders deliver the change that our nation demands."

Angela Fernandez, Executive Director at the Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights said, "We at NMCIR are alarmed by and condemn Arizona's passage of the most retrograde anti-immigration bill this country has ever seen. For the first time, in the US, an individual can be stopped and asked for their "papers" based on a police officer's "hunch" around someone's immigration status. This is too reminiscent of an era we thought we left behind generations ago. If the individual in question cannot produce documentation proving residency, they can be detained and deported with no opportunity to defend themselves. Yet, we are not surprised by this law, as it is the extreme outgrowth of an already dangerous and disastrous effort by the federal government to partner with local officials to deport immigrants. We hope that President Obama puts an immediate stop to Arizona's immoral and unconstitutional law and that he put an end to all partnerships between DHS and local law enforcement."

"Inaction on the part of the federal government only enables the continued the exploitation

of vulnerable workers, the separation of families, and the promotion of misguided policies at the local and state levels. The time to fix the broken immigration system is now. We applaud State Senators Serrano and Peralta for introducing a resolution that highlights all the contributions that immigrants have made to make New York State great," said Ana Maria Archila, Co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York."

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