

Appeals court blocks two more parts of Alabama immigration law

The U.S. 11th Circuit Court of Appeals temporarily halts two sections of the Alabama illegal immigration law until lawsuits seeking to overturn it entirely are decided.

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ATLANTA — A federal appeals court Thursday blocked two more sections of Alabama's tough new law targeting illegal immigration pending the outcome of lawsuits that seek to overturn the law entirely.

The U.S. 11th Circuit Court of Appeals issued an order temporarily halting a section that says courts can't enforce contracts involving illegal immigrants and another that makes it a felony for an illegal immigrant to do business with the state.

The law adopted last year was challenged by the federal government and a coalition of activist groups. A three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit heard arguments last week but said it wouldn't rule on the overall case until the Supreme Court decided a federal challenge to a similar law in Arizona. The appeals court is also weighing Georgia's new immigration law.

Lawyers in the Alabama case had asked the court to stop the two sections and others, at least temporarily, contending that they were harming people in the state.

"We are very pleased that the 11th Circuit understood the harms these provisions were causing in Alabama, and saw fit to enjoin them," said the Southern Poverty Law Center's Sam Brooke, who argued before the panel last week. "This is a great day for the residents of our state."

Alabama Atty. Gen. Luther Strange said he strongly disagreed with the court's decision.

"I will continue to vigorously defend Alabama's immigration law in the courts," he said. "I am hopeful that the Supreme Court's coming decision in the Arizona case will make clear that our law is constitutional."

In October, the appeals court temporarily blocked other parts of the law, including a requirement for schools to check students' immigration status.

Sections still in effect include one that requires a law enforcement officer to determine the citizenship and legal status of a person stopped or arrested if the officer has a "reasonable suspicion" that the person is in the country illegally.

Lawyers in the Georgia case did not ask for immediate action because the parts of that state's law that they believe are most harmful were blocked by a federal judge in June.

The Supreme Court will hear oral arguments April 25 on Arizona's SB 1070, the controversial 2010 law that triggered a wave of similar state-level efforts.

<http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-alabama-immigration-20120309,0,4401302.story>