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Arizona Lawmakers Push New Round of Immigration Restrictions

By [MARC LACEY](#)

PHOENIX — Arizona lawmakers are proposing a sweeping package of [immigration](#) restrictions that might make the controversial measures the state approved last year, which the Obama administration went to court to block, look mild.

Illegal immigrants would be barred from driving in the state, enrolling in school or receiving most public benefits. Their children would receive special birth certificates that would make clear that the state does not consider them Arizona citizens.

Some of the bills, like those restricting immigrants' access to schooling and right to state citizenship, flout current federal law and are being put forward to draw legal challenges in hopes that the [Supreme Court](#) might rule in the state's favor.

Arizona drew considerable scorn last year when it passed legislation compelling police officers to inquire about the immigration status of those they stopped whom they suspected were in the country illegally. Critics said the law would lead to racial profiling of Latinos, and a federal judge agreed that portions of the law, known as [Senate Bill 1070](#), were unconstitutional.

Similar legal challenges are likely to come in response to the latest round of legislation, some of which cleared a key Senate committee early Wednesday after a long debate that drew hundreds of protesters, some for and some against the crackdown.

“This bill is miles beyond S.B. 1070 in terms of its potential to roll back the rights and fundamental freedoms of both citizens and noncitizens alike,” said Alessandra Soler Meetze, executive director of the A.C.L.U. of Arizona. She said the measures would create “a ‘papers, please’ society” and that a new crime — “driving while undocumented” — would be added to the books.

Despite boycotts and accusations that the state has become a haven of intolerance, Arizona won plaudits last year from immigration hardliners across the country. On Tuesday night, the Indiana Senate voted to allow its police officers to question people stopped for infractions on their immigration status, one of numerous proposals inspired by Arizona's law.

“If you are ever going to stop this invasion, and it is an invasion, you have to quit rewarding people for breaking those laws,” said State Senator [Russell Pearce](#), the Senate president, who is

leading Arizona's effort to try to make life so difficult for illegal immigrants that they stop coming, or leave.

Opponents said the changes were a drastic rewriting of the core values of the country. In Tucson, a community group was so enraged by what it called the extremist nature of the proposals from Phoenix that it proposed severing the state in two, creating what some call Baja Arizona.

"Denying citizenship to children because they have parents without documents is crazy," said the Rev. Javier Perez, a Roman Catholic priest and immigrant from Mexico who waited in the legislative chamber into the night Tuesday for a chance to speak. "Honestly, I don't think anything I say will change their minds, but it's immoral what they're doing and we have to say this is against the values of America."

The measures would compel school officials to ask for proof of citizenship for students and require hospitals to similarly ask for papers for those receiving non-emergency care. Illegal immigrants would be blocked from obtaining any state licenses, including those for marriage. Landlords would be forced to evict the entire family from public housing if one illegal immigrant were found living in a unit. Illegal immigrants found driving would face 30 days in jail and forfeit the vehicle to the state.

The measures are not assured of passage. Although Republicans have a majority in the Legislature, the restrictions on citizenship failed to win approval in the Judiciary Committee this month, so they were rerouted to the Appropriations Committee, where they won passage.

Some state lawmakers said their constituents were furious over the Obama administration's lawsuit challenging the last immigration law and wanted the state to continue pressing the issue. Gov. [Jan Brewer](#), a Republican, said the state would file a countersuit against the federal government accusing it of not enforcing immigration laws.

Supporters of the crackdown include Katie Dionne, who described herself as an "average, everyday American" who wanted to prevent illegal immigrants from changing her way of life. "If their life is so wonderful why did they leave where they're from?" she asked senators.

[Janet Napolitano](#), the secretary of homeland security and a former Arizona governor, cites statistics showing that the influx of illegal immigrants across the Arizona border has declined markedly with significant increases in federal resources. But that has done little to ameliorate the feeling of crisis expressed by many Arizona politicians.

The state's business community, stung by a boycott that has reduced the number of conventions in the state, generally opposes the new round of restrictions. "This will put Arizona through another trial and hurt innocent businesspeople who are just trying to get ahead," said Glenn Hamer of the [Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#).