

Napolitano: No help on Ala. law

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October 26, 2011 02:28 PM EDT

Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said Wednesday the agency is not working with Alabama to help the state implement its controversial new immigration law and she expressed concerns about the impact of the measure on Hispanics.

Testifying before the House Judiciary Committee, Napolitano was asked by Rep. Bobby Scott (D-Va.) whether her department has been working with Alabama officials to aid the implementation of the law, which is regarded as one of the toughest in the nation. Napolitano said no, adding that the DHS has instead been “working with the Department of Justice on its challenge to that law.”

Asked to comment on the law’s impact on the state’s Hispanic residents, Napolitano said, “I don’t know the answer to that question right now. The law has just gone into effect.”

When Scott suggested that Hispanics must be “adversely effected” by the law because they have to show a form of identification “everywhere they go” – something the congressman said other citizens don’t have to do – Napolitano conceded, “I think that should be a real concern. You’re correct.”

Later in the hearing, Rep. Tim Griffin (R-Ark.) suggested that if the federal government was doing its job of securing the country’s borders, “you would not have to deal with a lot of these state laws,” such as the one in Alabama.

Napolitano dismissed the accusation that the law was a result of the Obama administration’s failure to do its job.

“I would suggest, first of all, that much of the information about the border that is distributed is not, in fact, accurate, and one of the things I’m trying to do is get the accurate information to the Congress and invite anyone from the Congress to come to the border,” she said. “But, secondly, in my judgment i think a number of the states are acting because the Congress has failed to act.”

Napolitano also said federal law should be the final voice of authority in the country’s immigration policy, telling lawmakers that there is “no latitude for states to make, pass, laws that change federal immigration policy.”

The parts of the law that were upheld by U.S. District Judge Sharon Blackburn require that schools verify students’ immigration status and allows officers to determine the

citizenship or status of those who have been stopped, detained or arrested, is considered the toughest immigration law in the country.

Following Blackburn's decision, it was reported that an [alarming number of Hispanic students](#) in the state had stopped showing up at school as a result of fearful families moving out of the state.

[Earlier this month](#), the administration filed a challenge to Alabama's new immigration law, asking an appeals court to block the enforcement of the measure, saying it violates federal powers. The 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Atlanta [halted parts of the law](#), staying the requirements to check the students' papers and mandating immigrants to carry documents at all times proving legal residency.

The office of Alabama Gov. Robert Bentley did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

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