



Report details complaints of profiling in wake of new Alabama immigration law

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By **Kim Chandler -- Montgomery Bureau**

MONTGOMERY, Alabama -- A report released by the National Immigration Law Center describes complaints of racial profiling, bullying and discrimination in the wake of Alabama's stringent immigration law.

The report was based on calls to a hotline hosted by the Southern Poverty Law Center, which is one of the groups fighting to overturn the immigration law, sometimes referred as HB-56. The 11-page report was compiled from more than 6,000 calls to the hotline over the past 10 months, according to the group.

"Scores of Latinos called to report that they suspected they had been stopped by police, after the HB 56 provisions became enforceable, mainly because they look Latino -- so that officers could question them about their immigration status," the report stated.

Alabama's immigration law, like Arizona's, requires officers to check a person's immigration status if the officer has a "reasonable suspicion" the person is in the country illegally. Much of the law has been put on hold by the courts but the reasonable suspicion provision has not been blocked.

A man identified as Roberto called to report that police stopped him and two coworkers as they were walking home from work and asked to see their immigration "papers" but gave no other reason for the stop.

A couple who own a tire and auto shop said they called police to report a bullet hole they had spotted in a window of the building they rent, but when police arrived they questioned them about their immigration status.

Others callers reported instances of contracts not being honored, housing discrimination, children being bullied in school, taunts in public and requests for proof of citizenship at furniture stores and other places.

"Hotline callers have reported that they have been singled out at the doctor's office, in the workplace, and at the local Wal-Mart, simply because of the way they look or sound," said Karen Tumlin, managing attorney for the National Immigration Law Center and co-author of the report.

"This type of behavior -- and laws that implicitly condone it -- is beneath our most fundamental values for fairness and equality, and should be rejected by all Americans," Tumlin said.

Hotline staff said that, in some instances, they were able to try to help callers resolve problems such as writing letters on their behalf or referring them to local resources.

A spokeswoman for Attorney General Luther Strange, who is tasked with defending Alabama's law in court, did not immediately have a comment.

Republican backers of the law have said its purpose is to ensure that those who live and work in Alabama do so legally. Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, who helped author Alabama's law, told a civil rights panel that the law expressly prohibits racial profiling. Kobach told the panel that, if an officer singles out someone because of their ethnicity, the officer has broken the law.

http://blog.al.com/spotnews/2012/08/report_details_complaints_of_p.html