

## US Chamber, AG resolve immigration dispute

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) A federal judge signed an agreement Wednesday that ends a four-year legal fight between the state and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce over Oklahoma's tough anti-illegal immigrant law.

The judgment signed by U.S. District Judge Robin Cauthron essentially accepts a 2010 ruling by the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that blocks enforcement of parts of the law. The settlement was requested by the Chamber and Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt.

Pruitt said the agreement puts in place what the appeals court and the U.S. Supreme Court have already decided on the immigration issue, adding: "We now can shift our focus to implementing and enforcing the law."

Chamber spokesman Bobby Maldonado did not immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Oklahoma's immigration law was considered one of the toughest in the nation when it was adopted by the Legislature in 2007 and signed into law by then-Gov. Brad Henry.

Among other things, it authorized the state to require use of an Internet-based system of employment authorization for public contractors. The law also sought to subject businesses that hire illegal immigrants to financial penalties, dictated who could and couldn't be fired, and required contractors to withhold taxes for workers without proper documentation.

Wednesday's agreement authorizes the state to require use of the electronic employment verification system. But it prohibits enforcement of possible legal sanctions against employers who fire an authorized employee while retaining an illegal immigrant worker, and the withholding of taxes for work performed by individual independent contractors.

The law was challenged in 2008 by the Chamber and other pro-business groups that argued the state was pushing immigration law enforcement onto employers. But the state said the law was needed because "illegal immigration is causing economic hardship and lawlessness in this state."

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