Legal Legamisms of Arizona’s Immigration Law

By Jennifer M. Chaco

April 15, 2010, Arizona passed an immigration law that was characterized by opponents as designed to “kill in a legal medium” those who are not carrying their alien registration cards or who have failed to register for such a card are barred from the United States.” These provisions, which call upon state and local officials to enforce federal immigration law, have been described as “the ultimate in local law enforcement.”

The bill instructs local and state agents to participate in the enforcement of federal immigration law. Specifically, the bill—amended on April 30 by H.R. 2162—states that where a state or local agent has knowledge of an individual for a violation of a law or ordinance, if that officer has “reasonable cause to believe, through the enforcement of federal immigration law. Some critics argue that the bill’s provisions are not sufficient to support federal immigration law enforcement, but others believe that the bill will have a significant impact on how states and localities address the issue of unauthorized immigration. In the meantime, however, the law has caused a significant increase in non-citizens who are required to register with federal immigration officials.

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