

The National Organization for Mexican American Rights (NOMAR, Inc.), a national Hispanic advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the civil rights of Hispanic Americans and to promoting equal opportunity for Hispanic Americans in employment and education, vigorously opposes the legislation designated as Arizona Senate Bill 1070, recently passed by the House and Senate of the State of Arizona and signed into law by Arizona Governor Jan Brewer. This law authorizes law enforcement officers in the state to stop anyone they suspect of being an illegal "alien". The only criteria is a "reasonable suspicion" that an individual is an undocumented person. Under this law, law enforcement personnel have broad latitude to use whatever criteria they choose to determine that there is a likelihood that an individual or group of people on the street, in a car, in a building may be in this country illegally, and therefore should be stopped and required to produce documents proving their legal status.

The obvious danger and civil rights concern is that law enforcement personnel will target people who appear to be Hispanic because their primary focus is illegal immigrants from Mexico and Latin America. All Hispanics in the State of Arizona, regardless of citizenship or legal residency may be in danger of being stopped while engaging in normal day-to-day activities, and forced to produce proof of citizenship or legal residency. Whether or not an individual appears Hispanic will most likely be based on skin color, accent, mannerisms, occupations, and other characteristics that fit the stereotype of a Mexican or Latin American illegal immigrant in the mind of individual law enforcement officers. Use of these stereotyping methods against members of the Hispanic community would constitute racial profiling, which would be a clear violation of the civil rights of our community. If permitted, this racial profiling will certainly lead to abuses and trumped up charges against innocent members of our community, and is clearly geared to create and build an anti-Hispanic sentiment among non-Hispanic Americans. No other ethnic group or class of people in the United States has been subjected to such a mean-spirited, regressive, and discriminatory practice. The Hispanic community does not deserve to be treated in this manner. NOMAR calls on the President, Congress and the US Department of Justice to vigorously enforce the civil rights laws of the United States. We request that the Department of Justice review the law signed by the Governor of Arizona to determine if federal laws are violated by this state law, and if so, to take action to stop the implementation before the civil rights of Hispanic Americans are violated in a manner and to a degree previously unprecedented in the United States of America.