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Judge upholds extreme parts of Alabama anti-immigrant law

By Pepe Lozano

A coalition of civil and immigrant rights group filed an emergency motion Sept. 29 appealing the ruling by a federal judge in Alabama the day before that upholds the most egregious provisions of HB 56, considered the most extreme anti-immigrant state law to date.

U.S. District Judge Sharon Blackburn on Wednesday upheld major provisions of the draconian measure authorizing state law enforcement to question and detain, without bond, people they "suspect" may be an undocumented immigrant.

Alabama's Republican Gov. Robert Bentley signed the law in June.

Another provision of the new law, which takes effect immediately, requires Alabama's public schools to verify the legal status of children.

The Justice Department, civil rights groups and some of Alabama's churches sued the state to block the law from taking effect. A motion has been filed to temporarily block the law while the ruling is brought before the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"Today is a dark day for Alabama," said Mary Bauer, legal director with the Southern Poverty Law Center, in a statement.

Alabama's Gov. Bentley and fellow GOP lawmakers hailed the ruling and intend to enforce

the provisions upheld. Alabama is the fifth state to enact anti-immigrant legislation inspired by Arizona's SB 1070. Federal judges have previously blocked key parts of immigration laws, similar to Alabama's, passed in Georgia, Utah, Indiana and Arizona. At least 17 other states have considered such measures this year.

The Latino population in Alabama grew by 145 percent to about 185,600 over the past decade. Although Latinos represent 4 percent of the states population, some counties north of Alabama have large Spanish-speaking communities and schools



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where most of the students are Latino.

After Republicans in Alabama took over the statehouse in Montgomery last year, cracking

Conservatives are calling for a hard line on addressing the nation's undocumented immigrants.

down on undocumented immigrants became a major driving force.

Janet Murguía, president and CEO of the National Council of La Raza, expressed outrage over the ruling: "Allowing these provisions to go into law will wreak havoc on the people of Alabama, not just Latinos."

Wade Henderson, president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, added the law "is designed to do nothing more than terrorize the Latino community."

Henderson emphasized, "This is a law that clearly harkens back to the segregationist creed of 'state's rights' by preempting the federal government's authority over immigration enforcement."

However Blackburn did block several sections of the new law, including parts that barred undocumented immigrants from seeking work or enrolling in public colleges. She also stopped the state from making it a crime to harbor, transport or shield undocumented residents, a provision specifically challenged by some churches.

Meanwhile, as the 2012 presidential election nears, many GOP candidates and conservatives are calling for a hard line on addressing the nation's estimated 12 million undocumented immi-

grants. They also criticize the Obama administration for suing Arizona and Alabama.

During a roundtable with Latino reporters this week, Obama said Arizona, the first GOP-dominated state to enact an anti-immigrant law, created "a great danger that naturalized citizens, individuals with Latino surnames, potentially could be vulnerable to questioning; the laws could be potentially abused in ways that were not fair to Latino citizens in Arizona."

Obama added, "We can't have a patchwork of 50 states with 50 different immigration laws."

Despite Obama's continued support for federal comprehensive immigration reform, most Republicans, including those who at one time supported bipartisan efforts, have now recanted and are opposed to any reform in Congress.

But back in Alabama, Isabel Rubio, executive director of the Hispanic Interest Coalition, said in a statement, "Not only will we appeal the court's decision, we will also mobilize and organize Alabamians to repeal this law and stand up for immigrant justice."



Pepe Lozano writes for the People's World.

Let's get positive and win

By PW Editorial Board

The American Jobs Act is the leading edge of the jobs struggle. It is the ground on which millions can be drawn into the fight to create jobs and rebuild the nation's infrastructure.

The AFL-CIO is embracing and promoting it. Others will come on board too as the jobs campaign gathers momentum.

The plans put forward by the Congressional Black Caucus, Progressive Caucus, AFL-CIO and Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., are more ambitious, and we recognize that they contain more in-depth solutions. But the hard fact is that none of these stand a chance of congressional approval given the current balance of forces in Congress, and in the House in particular.

The president's proposal does. The various provisions in the act appeal to a broad constituency, including political moderates in both parties.

Even for this plan the going will be tough. The Republicans are determined not to give the president a positive record to run on. They figure a president with no accomplishments, especially in a period of crisis, will not be returned to office.

That such a posture will hurt millions of people who are already hurting is of no concern to them.

In fact, in their view, the worse that economic conditions are, the better are their chances of winning back the White House and Congress.

Irresponsible yes, cynical yes, even diabolical, but as a political calculus, it contains some truth. Unless the American people are convinced otherwise, they could easily blame the president for the economic mess.

The president, probably more than the rest of us, is certainly well aware of this.

Thus he appears determined to take the initiative on the main economic policy questions facing the nation. It seems evident he is no longer willing to let Republicans frame the political agenda.

The left should not set the perfect against the possible. It's counterproductive. And let's not "damn" Obama's jobs and tax initiatives "with faint praise" - an approach employed too often.

A positive, robust grassroots campaign for Obama's jobs and tax-the-rich measures will put the wind in the president's sails and improve the prospects of a people's victory next year.

In fact, in their view, the worse that economic conditions are, the better

Civil rights, labor groups to hold jobs march Oct. 15

By Joe Sims

Energized by President Obama's bold call for passage of the American Jobs Act, civil rights and labor groups are calling for a national march in Washington, D.C., on October 15 to support it. The following day Obama will deliver remarks at the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial.

Hurricane Irene forced postponement of the previous August dates.

Speaking at a press conference announcing the event, Rev. Al Sharpton said, "We will bring forth the masses who have not been heard in the midst of the jobs debate. As the president fights for a jobs act, as supercommittees meet, they need to hear marching feet."

The National Action Network along with the NAACP and several labor unions are key organizers of the event. The march will begin at the Lincoln Memorial.

At a recent meeting of the Congressional Black Caucus, President Obama called on supporters to put on their marching shoes to press for passage of jobs legislation and increased revenue to pay for it.

Republicans in Congress are staunchly opposing the new legislation and demands that the rich pay their fair share in taxes.

Economists, however, have recently said that the Obama proposal could help boost the economy next year. Bloomberg News writes, "The legislation, submitted to Congress this month, would increase gross domestic product by 0.6 percent next year and add or keep 275,000 workers on payrolls, the median estimates in the survey of 34 economists showed. The program would also lower the jobless rate by 0.2 percentage point in 2012, economists said."



The plan would prevent "a contraction of the economy in the first quarter" of next year, said John Herrmann, a senior fixed-income strategist at State Street Global Markets LLC in Boston, who participated in the survey. "It leads to more retention of workers than net new hires."

While the official unemployment rate hovers at just over 9 percent, more realistic estimates put it at 16 percent of the workforce, with rates double that in African American and Latino communities.

Speaking in Minneapolis at the Next Up summit of young workers, Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis urged initiatives to help pass the American Jobs Act: "Labor Secretary Hilda Solis described how she learned the importance of collective bargaining from her father, a steward for the Teamsters and talked about her dedication to create good jobs and help pass President Obama's American Jobs Act. By the time Barack Obama got to office, Solis said, the nation had lost 4 million jobs. But instead, Republicans in Congress want to gut the budget and kill even more jobs."

Obama called on supporters to put on their marching shoes to press for passage of jobs legislation.

Unions join Wall Street protests

By John Wojcik

Major labor unions are joining the Occupy Wall Street protests in New York.

Despite inclement weather, the number of overnight "occupiers" has grown by a third, from 200 on the first night, Sept. 17, to over 300 the last few nights.

Transport Workers Union, Local 100, which represents 38,000 MTA workers, voted to support the protesters with both money and marchers. Union members are joining the closing bell march today.

John Samuelson, Local 100's president, said higher taxes on the wealthiest New Yorkers would help reduce some of the unemployment New Yorkers have suffered in the last few years.

Among the other unions that plan to participate are the United Federation of teachers, the Communication Workers of America and the Service Employees International Union.

Observers note that the pepper spraying incident where police attacked demonstrators last Saturday may actually have helped increase support for the demonstrations, which continue to grow in size and breadth.

"It's the workers having to sacrifice while the wealthy get away scot-free. It's kind of a natural alliance with the young people and students - they're voicing our message, why not join them? On many levels our workers feel an affinity with the kids. They just seem to be hanging out there getting the crap beaten out of them, and maybe union support will help them a little bit."

Samuelson said, "One of the things that drew this to my attention is that no one can get away from the fact that the richest have received a tax break while they keep trying to squeeze concessions from public workers. These folks down at Wall street are singing the same tune we are."

Para ganar, hay que ponernos positivos

Por Sam Webb

La Ley de Trabajos Norteamericanos [American Jobs Act] es el filo de vanguardia de la lucha por los trabajos. Es el terreno a donde se pueden atraer a millones a la lucha por crear trabajos y reconstruir nuestra infraestructura nacional.

La AFL-CIO la esta abrazando y promoviendo. Otros van a subir abordo también mientras gane ímpetu la campaña por los trabajos.

La Ley de Trabajos, introducido por el Presidente Obama en un discurso conmovedor y apasionado a una sesión conjunta del Congreso, no va tan lejos que algunas otras propuestas por crear trabajos. Los planes ofrecidos por el Comité Afronorteamericano del Congreso [Congressional Black Caucus], el Comité Progresista, la AFL-Cio y la congresista Jan Schakowsky, Demócrata por Illinois, son más ambiciosos y reconocemos que contienen más soluciones a fondo. Pero la dura realidad es que ninguno de estos últimos tienen la más mínima posibilidad de ser aprobados en el Congreso dado el balance actual de fuerzas en el mismo, y en especial en la Cámara de Representantes.

Pero la propuesta del presidente sí tiene posibilidades. La ley pueden atraer un amplio apoyo.

Aun para este plan el camino será duro. Los Republicanos, aunque al comenzar hacían ruidos conciliatorios, ya están determinados a no darle al presidente un récord positivo para utilizar en su campaña electoral. Creen ellos que un presidente sin éxitos, especialmente en un período de crisis, no será reelegido.

El hecho de que una postura así les pueda infligir más sufrimiento a millones de gente que ya están su-

friendo a estos les importa un bledo

En realidad, desde su punto de vista, con peores condiciones económicas, mejores serán sus oportunidades para reganar la Casa Blanca y el Congreso en el 2012.

¿Irresponsable? Sí. ¿Cínico? Sí, hasta diabólico, pero como puro cálculo político contiene alguna verdad. Y es por eso que parece resuelto a tomar la iniciativa en las principales cuestiones económicas que enfrentan a la nación. Resulta evidente que ya no está dispuesto a dejarles a los Republicanos encuadrar la agenda política.

En verdad, su discurso de la semana antepasada sobre los trabajos, y su apoyo para un impuesto especial sobre los millonarios (la opción Buffet) esta semana, puso a los líderes republicanos a la defensiva por primera vez desde 2010 cuando recapturaron control sobre la Cámara Baja.

A nosotros no nos va gustar todo lo que proponga el presidente, en especial los recortes a Medicare y Medicaid, y debemos movilizarnos para que sean abandonadas esas ideas. Pero a la misma vez eso no debe ser obstáculo a nuestro apoyo a todo corazón a la Ley de Trabajos Norteamericanos y al impuesto a los millonarios.

La izquierda no debe contraponer lo perfecto a lo posible. Es contraproductivo. Ni tampoco debemos "maldecir" las iniciativas de Obama sobre impuestos y trabajos "con apoyo débil."

Una campaña positiva y robusta a favor de las medidas de Obama por trabajos y impuestos a los ricos pondrá viento en las velas del presidente, les dará esperanza a la gente, y mejorará las oportunidades para una victoria popular para el año que viene.

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