

ACLU Issues Texas Travel Advisory, Warns of Rights Violations Due to 'Anti-Sanctuary' Law



Dallas, May 12 (RHC)-- Following the Texas passage of an anti-immigration law forcing state police to cooperate with federal immigration authorities on penalty of jail time, the American Civil Liberties Union has issued a “travel alert” warning visitors of possible rights violations by law enforcement.

Under the law, passed on May 7, officials will be prohibited from passing “Sanctuary City” laws to protect undocumented residents beginning in September. Cities, counties, and universities will have to divulge information regarding the immigration status of individuals if asked.

Local police and sheriffs will be able to enforce immigration law at their own discretion, inquiring about a person's immigration status during any type of legal detention, including routine traffic stops. Any law enforcement official found to have violated the ban could face removal from office as well as fines of up to \$25,000 for each day they are in violation.

Advocates with the ACLU have cried foul over the grave implications of the law. “The law gives a green light to police officers in the state to investigate a person’s immigration status during a routine traffic stop, leading to widespread racial profiling, baseless scrutiny, and illegal arrests of citizens and non-citizens alike presumed to be ‘foreign’ based on how they look or sound,” the ACLU said in a statement.

“The travel alert applies to all travelers to Texas, including U.S. travelers from other states and U.S. citizens. In addition, this alert applies to all encounters with federal, state, county law enforcement including local police and sheriffs.”

According to Texas Governor Greg Abbott, sanctuary policies could lead to supposedly fatal consequences. The governor has attempted to justify the draconian policy by pointing to a case in San Francisco, a sanctuary city, where Kate Steinle was allegedly shot by an unauthorized migrant and repeat felon.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, MALDEF, has nicknamed the law “Abbott’s Folly” and pledged to fight the law alongside aggrieved Texans and groups like the ACLU.

“We plan to fight this racist and wrongheaded law in the courts and in the streets. Until we defeat it, everyone traveling in or to Texas needs to be aware of what’s in store for them,” said Terri Burke, ACLU of Texas executive director.

“The Lone Star State will become a ‘show me your papers’ state, where every interaction with law enforcement can become a citizenship interrogation and potentially an illegal arrest.”

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