

Anti-immigrant Texas bill SB4 implemented despite suspension of some key provisions

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Late Wednesday evening in San Antonio Texas, Chief US District Judge Orlando Garcia temporarily blocked key provisions in Senate Bill 4 (SB4), an anti-immigrant bill designed to crack down on so-called "sanctuary cities" in Texas, days before it was set to go into effect on September 1.

The law, nicknamed the "show me your papers measure," will have devastating consequences for the immigrant community in Texas if the temporary block is overturned. Some of the aspects of SB4 that have been put on hold include:

- * Forcing local jails to honor federal agents' requests, known as detainers, to hold immigrants past points at which they would normally be released, so that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) could pick them up for federal detention.

- * Prohibiting any local official from "endorsing," or appearing to endorse, any policy that would materially limit immigration enforcement (including, possibly, standing on stage with advocacy groups that were advocating for such limits).

- * Requiring local police to allow their officers to cooperate with federal agents whenever possible, including "enforcement assistance" of federal immigration law.

Allowed to take effect, however, was one of the most controversial provisions of the bill that would give local law enforcement the authority to demand proof of a person's immigration status during routine interactions, such as a traffic stop.

Amy Fischer, policy director at RAICES, a nonprofit immigration advocacy group based in Texas, told the WSWWS, "If implemented, this bill will codify the relationship between local law enforcement officials and ICE. It would result in rampant racial profiling, and fast-track deportation for immigrants across the state."

Under the bill, local authorities would not be permitted to adopt policies that would at all hinder reporting to federal authorities any individual suspected of being in the country illegally. Additionally, the new law targets those who sought to aid the immigrant community: local law enforcement officials could be fined and removed from office if they did not cooperate with federal immigration authorities. Government entities would be fined \$25,500 for every day the law was violated.

Immediately after the announcement of Judge Garcia's temporary hold on key provisions of SB4, Governor Greg Abbott promised to appeal the ruling, while Attorney General Ken Paxton also vowed to continue fighting for the law's complete enforcement. Writing in a public statement posted to his web site, Paxton said, "Senate Bill 4 was passed by the Texas legislature to set a statewide policy of cooperation with federal immigration authorities enforcing our nation's immigration laws. Texas has the sovereign authority and responsibility to protect the safety and welfare of its citizens. We're confident SB4 will ultimately be upheld as constitutional and lawful."

The bill is, in fact, wildly antidemocratic and anti-immigrant. It represents the culmination of the tactics of the ruling class used to target immigrants and the working class more broadly over the past four decades; the systematic destruction of basic democratic rights, massive government surveillance, and increased military might.

The integration of local and federal law enforcement efforts in the attack on immigrants, one major component of SB4, is not an original initiative of Texas lawmakers. This effort was largely spearheaded by former President Obama under the "Secure Communities" program, which carried out a similar

campaign through the use of electronic biometrics such as fingerprint scans. Under this program, information on any individual suspected of being undocumented is collected from state, local and tribal law enforcement officers and then sent to the FBI. The FBI transmits the data to ICE.

The debate over SB4 comes while Houston's immigrant community of an estimated 500,000 undocumented people struggles to recover from Hurricane Harvey, which has left the city devastated. The utter indifference of the ruling class toward not only immigrants but working people more generally has been on full display in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. Just prior to the storm making landfall, ICE issued a statement putting immigrants on notice that immigration checkpoints would remain open despite the approach of the deadly storm.

Fischer of RAICES told the WSWS, "Stopping SB4 does not mean our communities are safe. Prior to SB4 we saw students with DACA status targeted by ICE ... just this week as Hurricane Harvey was hitting, Texas families were forced to make the decision between seeking shelter from the storm or facing the possibility of detention and deportation, which is a decision no one should have to make. All of this happened prior to the implementation of SB4."

Underlying the debate over SB4 is the more fundamental battle between the anti-immigrant war being aggressively pursued by the political establishment and the overwhelming pro-immigrant sentiment of the masses of the population. Not surprisingly, SB4 is fully supported by the Trump administration. The Department of Justice submitted a brief in favor of SB4 when the bill was initially passed.

The struggle to implement SB4 is happening amidst further plans by the Trump administration to escalate the war against immigrants in the form of ending the executive order known as DACA, which offers limited rights to work and study for undocumented immigrants brought here as children. Trump is expected to make a decision on the fate of the program by September 5.

The "opposition" being waged by elements within the Democratic Party political establishment to SB4, backed by city officials who posture as immigrant rights advocates by supporting "sanctuary cities," is largely a political stunt. Whether it be for reelection, or economic considerations for their city, their opposition

has nothing to do with the deep-felt sentiments of the masses. When in power the Democratic Party has carried out some of the most draconian immigration policy in history, with its main representative former President Barack Obama earning the nickname "deporter-in-chief."



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