

Truck drivers plan boycott of Florida in response to state's new anti-immigrant bill

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Are you a truck driver? Tell us what you think about the new law and the proposal for a boycott by filling out the form below. All submissions will be kept anonymous.

A nationwide truckers boycott of Florida is being organized in opposition to a new state law targeting undocumented migrants and refugees.

The new legislation was initially announced by the state's fascist governor Ron DeSantis in February and framed as a means of countering what he termed "the Biden administration's failure to secure our nation's borders." In a statement published on a government website, DeSantis declared, "Florida is a law and order state, and we won't turn a blind eye to the dangers of Biden's Border Crisis. We will continue to take steps to protect Floridians from reckless federal open border policies."

Primarily aimed at the 800,000 undocumented Central and South Americans living in Florida, and extending the laundry list of fascist attacks carried out by the state government on this highly exploited section of the population, the bill:

- "Requires employers to use E-Verify to check the employment eligibility of employees, and fines employers who fail to use E-Verify \$1,000 per day";
- "Suspends licenses of any employer who knowingly employs illegal aliens, and makes using a fake ID to gain employment a felony";
- "Enhances penalties for human smuggling, including making knowingly transporting five or more illegal aliens or a single illegal alien minor a second-degree felony subject to a \$10,000 fine and up to 15 years in prison";
- "Provides \$12 million to continue the Unauthorized Alien Transport Program to relocate illegal immigrants to sanctuary jurisdictions";

- "Bans local governments and NGOs from issuing identification documents to illegal aliens and invalidates all out-of-state driver licenses issued exclusively to illegal aliens"; and

- "Requires hospitals to collect and report healthcare costs for illegal aliens."

After passing the state legislature along party lines in both chambers in late April and early May, the bill was signed by DeSantis on May 10. It goes into effect on July 1.

Upon signing the bill, DeSantis boasted that "Nobody has a right to immigrate to this country—no foreigner." Elaborating on this blatant xenophobia days later, he said, "You can't build a strong economy based on illegality."

Immigration attorneys have denounced the bill's unambiguous violations of democratic rights and its overtly fascist undertones. Paul Chávez, the Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund attorney, told WKMG-TV News 6, "SB 1718 will push hundreds of thousands of people into the shadows—documented, undocumented; inspected, uninspected; authorized, unauthorized. It's detrimental to public safety."

Others have spoken on the implications of the bill's impact on the local and state economy. Immigration attorney Michelle Fanger said, "Based on my opinion, the construction industry, agriculture will have a major impact and also restaurants because those hire, though we don't like to admit it, a large group of individuals who don't have documents." She continued, "If you don't have these individuals to work, who is going to do the job?"

Reports have circulated on social media of construction workers not showing up to job sites or leaving the job early in response to the bill. One worker, speaking with CBS News Miami, said, "Many

workers are leaving, thinking they're going to be deported, so they're going to other states," and that "Everyone is really uneasy ... we just want to work to help our families."

An agricultural worker, speaking with NBC Miami, said, "We basically have to flee, flee as if we were criminals, and we are not criminals. On the contrary, we are here to work, and we work for a lot of companies. We don't know exactly where we stand right now. We depend on our jobs to survive."

Truck drivers around the country have responded to the bill with a call to boycott all transportation of goods into and out of Florida. The call has been led by Latin American truckers, who over the past week have published videos in both Spanish and English on TikTok condemning SB 1718.

In one video on TikTok viewed 700,000 times so far, a truck driver states: "I don't know about you guys, but my truck will not be going to Florida at all. If we all came together as one community for Rogel Aguilera when he was facing injustice, I'm pretty sure we can all come together as a Latino community and boycott Florida as a whole." Aguilera was a 26-year-old immigrant truck driver in Colorado sentenced to 110 years in prison for a fatal accident when his truck's brakes failed. Truckers responded to the sentencing with a boycott of the state of Colorado, forcing Governor Jared Polis to reduce the sentence to 10 years.

The worker concluded: "What they're doing to our brothers and sisters out there is not fair, and even in the truck driving industry we're millions. So hopefully we all come together and we all boycott Florida and we all say no to loads going to and from Florida."

Another truck driver, Roberto Sandoval, posted a video which has been viewed over one million times, calling for a national strike on June 1 and demanding that no trucks enter Florida.

These spontaneous calls by the working class and immigrant community take place against the backdrop of unending attacks—accelerated since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic—on their living and working conditions by the ruling capitalist class around the world.

Florida itself is a powder keg of opposition to DeSantis and the fascist Republican Party. Refusing to submit quietly to his recent raft of policies gutting academic freedoms, students and educators have

conducted several statewide walkouts in the recent period, including one last month at hundreds of high schools and colleges.

The Democratic Party has continued and widened the anti-immigrant policies of its Republican "colleagues." As the *World Socialist Web Site* recently wrote on the ending of the Title 42 policy, "Joe Biden continued and expanded the use of Title 42, expelling millions of asylum seekers, as well as his predecessor's policy of mass detention of refugees ... In its place he and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) chief Alejandro Mayorkas are requiring asylum seekers to file their claims in their home country or in 'regional processing centers' to be set up in Colombia, Guatemala and other Latin American countries."

In another open demonstration that the ruling class will bring the full force of the state down on the working class as the capitalist crisis intensifies, DeSantis announced on Tuesday that he is sending more than 1,100 state law enforcement assets to the Texas-Mexico border per the request of Republican Governor Greg Abbott. This will include Florida National Guard members, agents from the state Department of Law Enforcement, highway patrol troopers, and drones.



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