



*From citizenship to public service.*

## Sample Op-Ed

*This sample opinion piece is intended to serve as a starting point to help you craft a more personalized opinion piece for your local media outlets. Please feel free to make changes that reflect the social, political, and economic conditions in your local community.*

We should all be strongly opposed to Arizona's SB 1070. Why? Because it is an unconstitutional and costly measure which jeopardizes the public safety of everyone in the state, even those who are just visiting. It violates the civil rights of all Arizonans, regardless of their immigration status. Instead of promoting effective and fair approaches to enforcement of our nation's immigration laws, it perpetuates a climate of fear and hatred against Latinos and newcomers.

Many of the provisions of SB 1070 give local police responsibilities for enforcing federal immigration laws that will divert them from the important job of fighting crime and protecting our neighborhoods. The bill provides local police officers with the authority to conduct arrests – without warrants -- if the officer has “probable cause” to suspect the person is in the country illegally. Even more disturbing, it allows police to check the immigration status of a person whenever there is a “reasonable suspicion” that the person is in the country illegally. This sounds eerily like guilty until proven innocent, the complete opposite of one of our country's most fundamental beliefs. It opens up the floodgates for discrimination and racial profiling gone unchecked and unabated. It allows police to check the immigration status of individuals under the pretext that they have violated minor local ordinances, such as not cutting the grass or failing to maintain the family car in good working order. Do we want the police to go down that path reminiscent of Big Brother?

SB 1070 also opens up the possibility of costly litigation when states like Arizona and others can least afford it, because it is being challenged in court.

Proponents claim the legislation is needed to curb crime, but this is simply not true. Data from the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice find that the crime rate in ALL the states along the U.S.-Mexico border has actually gone down in the last several years. In Arizona alone, crime is at its lowest in decades.

This type of legislation also disintegrates the hard work that community groups, elected officials and police have done to ensure that immigrant communities trust local law enforcement authorities. This should be of grave concern to all of us across the country, particularly those of us living in communities with emerging Latino populations not familiar with local authorities. We should also be concerned that it attempts to take over what is by law a federal government responsibility – enforcing our nation's immigration laws.

Additionally, during these trying economic times, requiring localities to spend scarce resources on immigration enforcement when the funds are desperately needed for critical community services is not a smart move. This legislation also puts police between a rock and a hard place. If the police don't check an individual's status, private groups can sue. Yet, if police do that, they might be sued for racial profiling and discrimination. There is a reason Arizona's police chiefs oppose the law.

Finally, we should also be strongly opposed because several other localities are considering similar pieces of legislation, and that is very troubling. The enactment of SB 1070 clearly highlights the need for comprehensive immigration reform, which includes ensuring that law-abiding, tax-paying immigrant workers and their families have an opportunity to pursue U.S. citizenship. Comprehensive immigration reform also requires effective approaches to enforcing our federal immigration law. However, a deeply flawed piece of legislation is not the way to go about accomplishing what we all want: fair and humane treatment of ALL individuals, regardless of race or immigration status.