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Texas state legislators challenging 'sanctuary cities' for illegal immigrants

David Paulin

In Texas, two Republican legislators are taking up the “forgotten” issue in the presidential election – illegal immigration. Specifically, they're seeking to challenge municipalities that declare themselves “sanctuary cities” for illegal immigrants. Houston and Austin, the state capital, are among dozens of American cities that might be described as having “open borders” in defiance of America's immigration laws. Not surprisingly, such cities have become havens for illegal immigrants, most of whom arrive illegally from Mexico and Central America.

[Writing](#) in today's *Austin-American Statesman*, reporter Juan Castillo explains that the Republican lawmakers are taking up the issue of sanctuary cities with Attorney General Greg Abbott:

In a letter sent to Abbott this month, Rep. Frank Corte Jr. of San Antonio and Sen. Dan Patrick of Houston asked whether the Texas Legislature has the authority to deter local governments from adopting policies — or to invalidate existing policies — that hinder state enforcement of federal immigration laws.

Such policies "would include those that prevent local citizens, officials, or law enforcement agencies from cooperating with the federal government regarding a person's immigration status," their letter says. "Although federal law expressly forbids local policies that prohibit or restrict information regarding immigrant status, sanctuary cities continue to support such policies."

According to Castillo's article, 1.5 million illegal immigrants live in Texas, and there are 12 million in all in the country. Unfortunately, state lawmakers have had a tough time devising laws to facilitate the interdiction and deportation of illegal immigrants by police officers, who are hamstrung over concerns such as “racial profiling.” As Castillo's article notes:

At least 20 of the immigration bills never made it out of the House State Affairs Committee after its chairman, David Swinford, R-Dumas, said that lawyers from the attorney general's office had advised him that the proposals might not pass legal challenges or were trumped by federal law.

The move comes as some towns have taken it upon themselves to deter the flow of illegal immigrants into their communities. Earlier this year, the Dallas suburb of Farmers Branch banned apartment rentals to illegal immigrants – only to have a Federal judge overturn the ordinance that voters had supported, declaring it was [unconstitutional](#).

Some Texas landlords have even sought to ban prospective tenants by instituting a “no tattoo” and “[no body piercing](#)” [policy](#). In part, such moves seem aimed at keeping out illegal immigrants; those from the lowest social classes in Mexico and Central America often adorn themselves with tattoos and body piercings.

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