



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on January 19, 2011

Mississippi Senate Passes Arizona-Style Immigration Bill

An Arizona-style immigration bill passed the Mississippi State Senate on Tuesday and could have law enforcement officers checking the immigration status of persons during any lawful stop. The Jackson Clarion-Ledger reported on Jan. 19, that in the Democrat-controlled House, Judiciary A Committee Chairman Ed Blackmon (D-Canton) said he's not sure which committee will get Senate Bill 2179, so its fate remains unclear.



Similar legislation went to the House last year but died in committee. However, the *Clarion-Ledger* asserts that conservative Democrats mounting re-election campaigns might find the legislation more favorable this year.

The provisions of the bill state that:

[They] intended to work together to discourage and deter the unlawful entry and presence of aliens and economic activity by persons unlawfully present in the United States....

For any lawful stop, detention or arrest made by a law enforcement official or a law enforcement agency of this state or a law enforcement official or a law enforcement agency of a political subdivision of this state in the enforcement of any other law or ordinance of a county, municipality or the state where reasonable suspicion exists that the person is an alien and is unlawfully present in the United States, a reasonable attempt shall be made, when practicable, to determine the immigration status of the person, except if the determination may hinder or obstruct an investigation.

The bill prohibits racial profiling:

A law enforcement official or agency of this state or political subdivision of this state may not consider race, color or national origin in implementing the requirements of this subsection except to the extent permitted by the United States or Mississippi Constitution.

Joey Fillingame, (R-Sumrall), one of the bill's sponsors, believes it is an improvement over the Arizona bill: "We did not want anyone to go out and start picking on or racial profiling people."

However, during Senate debate, the Mississippi bill's impact on legal immigrants, cities, and law enforcement agencies was questioned. Governor Haley Barbour (photo, above left) told *FoxNews.Latino* on January 17 that it's reasonable to let law officers check the immigration status of people who are stopped for traffic violations or other possible offenses.

Barbour, who cannot seek a third term, is considering a 2012 presidential run. Even though he will certainly face immigration issues on the national stage, he's known to be moderate on immigration



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policy and said in a pre-session interview that he wouldn't commit to signing or vetoing a bill without knowing specifics.

Barbour declared that the federal government is not doing a good job of enforcement on the border, thus creating security problems for border states. He added,

Arizona, New Mexico, California and Texas share a very long border with Mexico, and they have issues to deal with, we don't have to deal with. So there are a lot of things that are very appropriate to put in the law in Arizona or Texas that are unnecessary here.

Republican Lt. Governor Phil Bryant (running for governor this year) is the most outspoken supporter of the bill.

The Mississippi Legislature is in its third week of a three-month session, and can expect opposition from groups in favor of continuing the U.S. practice of permitting unfettered immigration.



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