



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 16, 2017

Phoenix City Council Rejects Petition for Sanctuary City Status

In response to President Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration, residents in Phoenix petitioned for sanctuary status; however, the request was rejected by the Phoenix City Council on Wednesday by a vote of 7-2 after a heated debate.

The [petition](#) was filed by resident Rick Robinson following President Trump's January 25 executive order that threatens to cut federal funding to sanctuary cities or jurisdictions that violate federal immigration laws. Robinson is a Republican businessman, according to media outlets, and has been accused by Phoenix Mayor Greg Stanton of being a "political operative." According to 12News.com, "The petition is widely viewed as an effort, by both Republicans and immigrant rights advocates, to get Mayor Greg Stanton, a Democrat, to cast a vote on the issue."



Robinson's petition states: "As the capital of the State of Arizona, it is incumbent upon the City of Phoenix to demonstrate leadership in protecting the many productive and law-abiding members of our community who happen to be undocumented immigrants."

But according to Mayor Stanton, who presides over the city council, pursuing sanctuary status would be in violation not only of federal law but of state law as well. He said the petition violates a 2010 state law signed by then-Arizona Governor Jan Brewer that permits police to question individuals about their immigration status. Under Arizona's Senate Bill 1070, Phoenix cannot be a sanctuary city. Stanton also emphasized that SB 1070, which requires police to cooperate with federal immigration agencies, was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In a statement released by Stanton in response to the petition, he explained:

The issue of whether any Arizona city can be a so-called "sanctuary city" is already settled by state law. After a lengthy court battle, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously upheld portions of S.B. 1070 that apply to all Arizona cities — including Phoenix — nearly five years ago. Last fall, the state attorney general reached a settlement with civil rights groups, including the ACLU, on how S.B. 1070 is enforced, and Phoenix complies with those terms. We must respect the Supreme Court's unanimous decision and the rule of law — and I will not ask Phoenix police officers to knowingly violate the law.

In the same statement, however, Stanton announced that he would not allow Phoenix to cooperate with the Trump administration on "mass deportation plans."



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“As long as I am mayor, Phoenix will not participate in the 287(g) program or enter into any other agreements with the Trump Administration that aim to implement mass deportation plans — period,” he said.

Still, proponents of the petition were disappointed to see it fail, and responded to the vote with cries of “Shame on you!”

“What we care [about] is that our families remain together and the only way to do that is to move quickly and to not collaborate with Immigration and Customs Enforcement,” urged Carlos Garcia, director of immigrant advocacy group Puente Arizona.

Supporters pointed to the case of Guadalupe Garcia de Rayos, who was recently deported to Mexico despite having lived in the United States for nearly 20 years and birthing two U.S.-born children. The case underscores some of the issues with the existing immigration system in the United States. Guadalupe’s sister filed a petition for her to obtain legal permanent resident status more than 10 years ago, but the petition was still pending when Garcia De Rayos was deported. The *Arizona Republic* [notes](#) that the current wait for sibling-sponsored green cards for people from Mexico is 30 or more years.

However, there were plenty of opponents to the petition present at Wednesday’s council meeting as well, reports the *Phoenix New Times*.

“Never in my life did I hear of the term ‘sanctuary city,’” Fred Linsenmeyer testified. “First, you have sanctuary cities, and pretty soon you have sovereign states, and pretty soon you have the end of the United States.”

Cynthia Herrin voiced fears that Phoenix would become like San Francisco, noting that the increase in crime in Phoenix can be attributed to the illegal immigration.

“Ten years ago, everyone wanted to go there,” she said. “Nobody goes there anymore; everyone’s afraid of the crime that’s there.”

Claudia McIntosh explained that she immigrated to the United States legally and that others should follow the example of her family. “When you don’t follow the rule of law you are definitely not a good citizen,” she noted, adding that illegal immigrants are giving all Mexicans in the United States a bad name. “I resent that very much,” she added, “because I am brown and I am originally Mexican, and they compare me to these kinds of people.”

Anthony Woss accused the American Civil Liberties Union, which has been a key challenger to SB 1070, of looking out for its own self-interests at the expense of Phoenix citizens. “The ACLU thinks they can take over Phoenix because they’re the ones who want those illegal immigrants here to take over our jobs,” he said.

And Tim Rafferty said simply that opponents merely want to see the laws of this country upheld. “We must be living in the ‘Twilight Zone,’” he said. “This is the United States of America. We were built on laws. This isn’t about being mean or being hateful. This is our immigration laws.”

The petition had also been opposed by the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association, which issued a press release prior to the vote in which it stated:

Despite what politicians may think or want, police officers have to uphold their oaths of office and operate according to the rule of law. Presidential Executive Orders are federal law that cannot be disregarded simply because they do not comport with someone’s political agenda.



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According to the Pew Research Center, there are approximately 250,000 illegal immigrants living in Phoenix, based on 2014 figures.

The petition follows on the heels of an effort made by the state of California to become the first-ever sanctuary state and even cites these efforts, saying, “Lawmakers in California have set an important example for the rest of the country by introducing legislation that would make California a sanctuary state.”

California Senate Democrats advanced bills to create statewide sanctuary for illegal immigrants, provide money to pay for immigration lawyers on behalf of immigrants facing deportation and stop efforts to create a Muslim registry, which senators believe will be on President Trump’s itinerary.

“We in California have a responsibility to say no and to be counter balance of the nightmare coming out of Washington,” San Francisco Democrat Scott Wiener insisted.

Additionally, the sanctuary city of San Francisco filed a lawsuit against President Trump’s executive order against such cities, claiming it is unconstitutional.

Though the Phoenix City Council voted down the petition, Mayor Stanton said the council will form an ad hoc subcommittee to determine how the city will respond to Trump’s executive order. *AZ Central* reports, “It will look at ways to improve policing within current state and federal laws and how to help families facing ‘potentially devastating circumstances,’ according to a memo.”



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