

## Immigrant Rights in Alabama

Posted on May 8, 2012 by Rosemary Feurer

Yesterday, Alabama lawmakers refused to repeal the disastrous HB 56 despite the million dollars this failed experiment continues to cost the state every day. Incredibly, with very little time left in the legislative year, Senator Scott Beason unveiled an entirely new 63 page bill which he intends to substitute today for House Bill 658, an HB 56 “tweak bill” that has passed the House. Senator Beason’s bill, the result of back-door dealing, will undo the modest progress HB 658 would make toward alleviating some of the worst aspects of HB 56.

The Beason substitute to HB658 contains serious flaws:

- It is deaf to the cries of teachers, administrators and parents to leave schoolchildren out of this fight. It maintains the HB56 requirement that schools turn teachers and administrators into immigrant agents.
- If adopted, law enforcement will have no choice but to arrest people who are not criminals and put them in our already over-crowded jails at taxpayer expense. This imposes another unfunded mandate on our law enforcement agencies, which are already strapped for funding to fight real crime.
- It undermines public safety by failing to provide adequate protection for victims of crime after they cooperate with law enforcement, thereby discouraging them from reporting crime. Essentially, the message is “cooperate with police and we’ll hand you over to immigration.”
- The substitute thumbs its nose at religious leaders by continuing to criminalize the good works of faith communities, including increasing the penalties for meeting basic human needs.
- By continuing to prohibit landlords from renting to undocumented immigrants, it will make many families homeless, including those with US citizen children.
- The substitute would write into law the anti-immigrant vigilantism already caused by HB 56. It introduces a Scarlet Letter provision that would require DHS to publish on its website the names and locations of undocumented immigrants who have appeared in state courts.

It's hard to believe, but this bill is actually WORSE than HB 56. We urgently need to call our senators TODAY, and demand that they pass no legislation that puts kids at risk, separates families, forces teachers and law enforcement to take on the burden of immigration agents, and threatens the human and civil rights of Alabamians. Please call the Senate TODAY at (334) 242-7800 and ask your senator to do what's right for Alabama.

We expect the Senate will take up debate on immigration again this afternoon. You can listen to the live audio feed from the Senate floor here:

<http://www.legislature.state.al.us/audio/senateaudio.html>. We'll post on Facebook and Twitter as soon as they begin debate on the immigration bill.

Thank you,  
Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice  
@ALimmigrant  
#crisisAL

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Six activists were handcuffed and escorted away from the Senate chamber in the Alabama statehouse. They were not arrested as the state officials decided not to press charges. The action, it seems, was a planned act of civil disobedience. LAWCHA and SLSA members are mobilizing in protest behind this momentum.

For more information on these protests, see:

- Brian Lyman, "[Immigration law protesters detained outside Alabama Senate](#)," *Montgomery Advertiser*, May 3, 2010
- Madison Underwood, "[VIDEO: HB56 protestors handcuffed, removed from outside Alabama Senate chamber doors](#)," *Weld for Birmingham*

For up-to-minute updates, see the feed for [Twitter Hash Tag, #HB56](#).

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## What Can I Do?

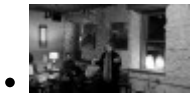
- Focus calls and emails on Governor Robert Bentley's office: (334) 242-7100, [email](#).
- From SLSA President Jennifer Brooks: "Callers, if you wish, should ask for full repeal

of HB 56 and the amendment bill HB 658.”

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Thanks to Jennifer Brooks and Michael Innis-Jiménez for the information and links.

## Author



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