

Report: 40 U.S. states passed immigration laws in 2011

Published on Tue, Aug 09, 2011

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AUSTIN, Texas - Nearly 250 new immigration laws and resolutions were enacted in 40 U.S. states during the first half of this year, indicating frustration with the federal government's handling of the issue, according to a new report.

The laws range from hiring restrictions to voter identification and allowing in-state tuition for illegal immigrants, according to the report released on Tuesday by the National Conference of State Legislatures. The numbers show a slight decrease in activity from last year, but every state and Puerto Rico proposed legislation dealing with the issue in the first six months of 2011. By comparison, only 38 immigration laws were enacted by states in 2005.

"States are reacting to the federal government in inefficiency and they're trying to figure out how to deal with it -- good, bad and ugly," said Wendy Sefsaf, director of communications at the American Immigration Council, a Washington think tank. "Immigration impacts every policy issue there is, and people are trying to figure out how to manage it, for better or for worse, because the federal government won't." Among the findings in the report, released during the council's annual meeting in San Antonio:

- * 14 states included funding for immigration initiatives in their budgets.
- * Governors vetoed 12 pieces of legislation, including bills related to social services and immigration.
- * Ten states enacted legislation requiring businesses or contractors to use the government E-Verify program to ensure the legal status of workers.
- * Five states -- Alabama, Georgia, Utah, Indiana and South Carolina -- enacted omnibus laws inspired by Arizona's 2010 law, which gave police the power to enforce immigration. All have been challenged in court.

Published in the Reuters

Source URL:

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