

Should Schools Help Catch Illegal Immigrants?

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The long and winding road that is the challenges to Alabama's Taxpayer H.B. 56 has begun. Federal Judge Sharon Lovelace Blackburn has issued various rulings, but they are early, preliminary and procedural skirmishes, so there are no winners and losers yet.

But I have to ask Alabama decisionmakers, why bother? Many of the politicians involved are restrictionists and nativists who insist that they do not want government overreaching in their lives. And yet, they do not seem to mind, in fact insist upon, reaching into the lives of undocumented families, even at the state level.

Surely it is not large numbers behind this overreaction that is H.B. 56. Immigration Policy Center and Census Bureau figures reveal that in 2010, only 5 percent of Alabamians are Latino (3.9 percent) or Asian (1.1 percent), and in 2009, 87.8 percent of children in Asian families in the state were U.S. citizens, and 85.1 percent of Latino children in the state's families were U.S. Citizens. With these small communities, why the rush to symbolize intolerance by enacting the country's most restrictionist and comprehensively anti-immigrant statute?

Such laws are mean-spirited and punitive. The schoolchildren are already not showing up for classes. In enacting bans on college enrollments and counting measures on schoolchildren allowed by law to attend schools since Plyler v. Doe in 1982, Alabamians reveal themselves not as strict constructionists or conservatives, but as ideologues who will use unnecessary legislation and the power of government to intervene in families to punish innocent children. Public shame on them.

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