



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 11, 2020

AG Barr: DOJ Will Not Take Obstruction by Sanctuary Jurisdictions “Lying Down”

Speaking at the National Sheriff’s Association 2020 Winter Legislative and Technology Conference in Washington, D.C., on February 10, Attorney General William Barr said that the Justice Department would immediately file multiple lawsuits against sanctuary jurisdictions for unconstitutionally interfering with federal immigration enforcement, and implement unprecedented national reviews of left-wing sanctuary governments and prosecutors.



After mentioning several challenges faced by law-enforcement personnel today, Barr told the conference attendees, “Another aspect of the crime problem in this country, and one I will focus on this evening, is the challenge presented by criminal aliens.” Barr defined these criminals as “individuals who enter our country — frequently illegally — and then proceed to commit crimes.”

Barr went on to explain what was wrong with the concept of “sanctuary cities.” He explained:

When we are talking about sanctuary cities, we are talking about policies that are designed to allow criminal aliens to escape. These policies are not about people who came to our country illegally but have otherwise been peaceful and productive members of society. Their express purpose is to shelter aliens whom local law enforcement has already arrested for other crimes. This is neither lawful nor sensible.

It is not lawful because the Constitution vests the federal government with the sole authority to make and enforce immigration law. For decades, Congress enacted immigration laws authorizing the removal of aliens in the United States who commit certain crimes. Those laws have been passed by members of both political parties and signed by presidents of both political parties. For example, in 1996, President Clinton signed into law a federal statute that prohibits restricting information sharing about aliens.

Barr observed that while states cannot interfere with federal law enforcement, they are certainly permitted to assist the federal government with the fulfillment of federal law. But jurisdictions that call themselves “sanctuary” cities, counties, or states simply refuse to do that.

Barr issued a warning to those jurisdictions: “When state and local governments try to obstruct rather than assist federal law enforcement, we are not taking those efforts lying down.”

Barr named several specific places where the Justice Department will take action against local jurisdictions that have obstructed rather than cooperated with federal enforcement of immigration law. Among these are:

- DOJ is “filing a complaint against the State of New Jersey seeking declaratory and injunctive relief against its laws that forbid state and local law enforcement from sharing vital information about criminal aliens with DHS.”



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- DOJ is “filing a complaint seeking declaratory and injunctive relief against King County, Washington, for the policy ... that forbids DHS from deporting aliens from the United States using King County International Airport.”
- “Further, we are reviewing the practices, policies, and laws of other jurisdictions across the country. This includes assessing whether jurisdictions are complying with our criminal laws, in particular the criminal statute that prohibits the harboring or shielding of aliens in the United States.”

Barr concluded his talk by taking a no-nonsense approach to send this message to sanctuary jurisdictions: “We will consider taking action against any jurisdiction that, or any politician who, unlawfully obstructs the federal enforcement of immigration law.”



Photo: AP Images

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com.

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