



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on October 13, 2011

Hispanics Strike In Alabama to Protest New Anti-Illegal Law

A substantial numbers of Hispanics in Alabama are apparently staging a strike, closing businesses, including restaurants, to protest the state's tough new law that seeks to stem the tide of illegal immigration. The Associated Press has reported that everything from poultry plants to schools are missing what used to be a familiar presence: Hispanic workers.

[They're miffed about HB 56](#), which federal [Judge Sharon Blackburn](#) (left) of Alabama's [northern district](#) largely upheld two weeks ago, leaving the state to enforce what may be the nation's toughest measure to crack down on border jumpers.



What's Closed

[According to](#) the AP, “[a]t least a half-dozen poultry plants shut down or scaled back operations Wednesday and many other businesses closed,” noting that the “work stoppage was aimed at demonstrating the economic contribution of Alabama’s Hispanic immigrants.”

It was unclear exactly how widespread the protests were, but a poultry company spokesman said officials were reporting unusually high absences at plants in northeast Alabama, where much of the state’s chicken industry is based.

In the northeast Alabama town of Albertville, numerous Hispanic-owned businesses along Main Street had the lights off and signs that said they wouldn’t be open. Mexican restaurants, a bank that caters to Hispanics, small grocery stores, and supermarkets were all shuttered.

Another [AP report said](#) the work stoppage is focused in the northeastern part of the state, which is home to most of its poultry industry, which is worth \$2.7 billion.

“We want the mayor, the governor, this judge to know we are part of the economy of Alabama,” Mexican immigrant Mireya Bonilla [told the AP](#). She manages a supermarket called La Orquidea, or “The Orchid,” in Albertville.

[According to](#) the AP, “[t]he town of about 19,000 people has one of the highest concentrations of Hispanics in the state.”

Out of 4.7 million people in Alabama, there are an estimated 185,000 Hispanics, most of them of Mexican origin.

It wasn’t clear exactly how many workers participated in the protest, but the parking lot was virtually empty at a Wayne Farms poultry plant, which employs about 850 people in Albertville. All along Main Street, Hispanic businesses were closed.



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The [Pew Hispanic Center puts](#) the figure of Hispanics in Alabama at 145,000.

The wire service then quoted a Dominican immigrant who shut down his store, costing himself \$2,500. "We closed because we need to open the eyes of the people who are operating this state," [he told the AP](#). "It's an example of if the law pushes too much what will happen."

The AP [also reported](#) absences from schools, reprising reports from last week: "At Crossville Elementary School in DeKalb County, Principal Ed Burke said about 160 of the school's 600 students weren't in class." That's 25 percent of the school's pupils.

Blackburn Upholds Law

As [The New American reported](#) last week, federal Judge Blackburn upheld six of the law's 10 key provisions. The most important provision, similar to one struck down in Arizona's [SB 1070](#), requires police to determine the immigration status of a person they lawfully stop, detain, or arrest if they reasonably suspect the person is an illegal alien. [Blackburn upheld](#) that part of the law.

Another section [Blackburn upheld](#) punishes employers who employ illegal aliens if the employer fails to hire or discharges an American citizen or legal alien permitted to work. Another section requires police to determine the immigration status of those caught driving without a license, and then, if the person is found to be an illegal alien, turn them over to the immigration authorities. Blackburn also ruled that the school system can indeed inquire and collect data about the immigration status of its students.

In upholding so much of the law, [Blackburn issued](#) an opinion that is nearly the mirror opposite of a [federal judge's decision](#) about Arizona's SB 1070. Indeed [Blackburn cited the arguments of](#) dissenting judge Carlos Bea in that case. She ruled that HB 56 does not not conflict with or intrude upon the federal government's control of immigration, and she repeatedly wrote that it does not interfere with American foreign policy interests. Importantly, citing Bea, she said Congress envisioned states doing exactly what Alabama has done: help enforce federal immigration law.

The Obama administration's case [rested upon](#) claims that HB 56 interferes with American foreign policy interests and federal prerogatives to enforce immigration law and trespasses the Fourth Amendment by permitting unlawful search and seizure. The administration also argued that the law unconstitutionally bars illegal-alien children from entering public school, even though the law merely requires the state to count them.

[Blackburn ignored](#) the appeals of 16 foreign nations that filed briefs with her court. She also ignored the irrational entreaties of Obama's non-government legal team of radical leftists, who repeatedly and falsely claimed the bill is "racist" and "mean-spirited" and would cause police to "profile" Hispanics.

[Those appeals](#) to anger and fear came from the usual suspects: the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), the [National Immigration Law Center](#), and the discredited leftist [Southern Poverty Law Center](#). They even tried to evoke images of [Jim Crow](#) Laws, now long dead, in claiming that Alabama is "once again on the wrong side of history."

Blackburn's ruling apparently shocked the Obama administration and its leftist legal cohort. She [had blocked](#) the law in August based on their legal appeals, noting that she was putting the law on hold until she could fully digest and consider the matter.

Obama and his myrmidons [have appealed](#) to the [11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals](#).

HB 56 [became law](#) in August.



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'Vanishing' Hispanics

The latest news from Alabama continues a movement [reported in](#) the *New York Times* and by the AP. On Oct. 3, the *Times'* writer [breathlessly described](#) the horror in Alabama: " "The vanishing began Wednesday night, the most frightened families packing up their cars as soon as they heard the news."

They left behind mobile homes, sold fully furnished for a thousand dollars or even less. Or they just closed up and, in a gesture of optimism, left the keys with a neighbor. Dogs were fed one last time; if no home could be found, they were simply unleashed.

And writing of a poultry plant that was missing workers, the [Times reported](#) terrifying "silence."

"It is hard to differentiate the silence of the workday, the silence of abandonment or the silence of paralyzing fear," the [Times reported](#).

Alabamians, apparently, are glad for the peace and quiet. The *Times* [was forced](#) to report that HB 56 is having its intended effect: driving illegals out of the state and putting unemployed American back to work:

[O]ne of the poultry processing plants in Albertville had a job fair, attracting an enormous crowd, a mix of Hispanic, black and white job-seekers, lining up outside the plant and down the street.

"This needed to be done years ago," Shannon Lolling, 36, who has been unemployed for over a year, said of the law.

Mr. Lolling's problem seemed to be with the system that had brought the illegal-immigrant workers here, not with the workers themselves.

"That's why our jobs went south to Mexico," he said. "They pay them less wages and pocket the money, keep[ing] us from having jobs."



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