



Will Texas Adopt Arizona-style Response to Illegals?

True to her promise last April, Rep. Debbie Riddle (R-District 150, at left) has introduced legislation in the Texas House of Representatives that would follow the lead of Arizona in dealing with the problem of illegal immigration. If Texas' HB 17 becomes law, state and local police in the Lone Star State would have the same authority granted to law enforcement officers in Arizona under SB 1070 to make inquiry concerning the nationality and legal status of individuals and arrest those who are in the country illegally.



On April 28, ABCNews reported on Rep. Riddle's intention to introduce the legislation follow the November elections. As ABC reporter Emily Friedman noted, Riddle is hardly a newcomer to the debate over illegal immigration: "Riddle, who is up for election in November, introduced similar legislation last session, but it never made it out of committee."

The rise of the "Tea Party" and the stunning nationwide defeat of Democrats in the November 2 elections adds momentum to Riddle's legislative agenda. She was reelected by a decisive majority of 71 percent, and, with a touch of dramatic flare, the representative for Tomball, Texas, made sure that she was first in line to file her bills with the Chief Clerk's office the following Monday morning. According to Rep. Riddle's website:

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Riddle set up some folding chairs and pitched a make-shift campsite outside the floor of the Texas House of Representatives beginning on Saturday afternoon to make sure she was the first in line when the Chief Clerk's office opened for early filing this morning. She spent both Saturday and Sunday night sleeping on the lobby floor.

"A visitor that walked by told me that I reminded them of the kids that camp out for Duke basketball tickets in Durham, North Carolina," Riddle said. "It was eye-opening to realize that people think it's normal to be passionate about something like college basketball, but odd to be passionate about your state's politics."

Riddle's dramatic gesture has served its purpose of drawing attention to her proposals. While the representative slept on the lobby floor, protesters gathered outside, enraged that efforts to meaningfully address the illegal immigration crisis refuse to go away. As Fox 10 (Phoenix) reported:

While Riddle slept inside the Capitol over the weekend to get her front row seat, organizers with the League of United Latin American Citizens protested outside.

"The question keeps coming up, 'Who is going to pay for the deportation? Who is going to pay for all these costs that are coming up?'" said Marcelo Tofoya.

In a statement released Monday, LULAC Deputy State Director Linda Chavez said, "Here we go again." She went on to say that ..."anything from the Arizona Law we question the



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constitutionality."

As for voterID, "We will oppose it," said Chavez who concluded by stating, "The Bills create a lot of anger and resentment in our communities."

The notion that individuals who present themselves at a polling place would be expected to demonstrate that (a) they are who they claim to be, and (b) they are actually citizens who are qualified to vote is far from a radical notion, and it is Chavez who gives the appearance of injecting race into the discussion with her invocation of "our" communities. One thing is certain: the "community" of District 150 overwhelmingly supports the introduction of such legislation, and the representatives of the people of Texas will now have an opportunity to give due consideration to Rep. Riddle's proposals.

And as regards Tofoya's concerns about paying for the cost of deportations — perhaps that is one tax burden for which Texans would gladly pay. Certainly the funds saved in reducing the abuse of the states' educational, medical, and social services by removing illegal immigrants from the dole would go a long way toward offsetting the cost of upholding the law and deporting those individuals who have violated immigration laws.

According to Riddle's official website, the whole series of bills which she has introduced will form a basis for dealing with the problem of illegal immigration in a comprehensive manner:

Although the immigration legislation has generated the most buzz this year, Riddle deliberately filed her Voter ID bill before any of her others, making it the very first bill filed for the new session: HB 16. The bill requires one form of photo ID or two forms of non-photo ID in order to vote in Texas.

"Voter ID has got to be one of the top priorities of the legislature this session." Riddle said. "It passed in the House two session ago and was stalled by politics in the Senate. It passed in the Senate last year and then was stalled by politics in the House. There are no more excuses left this time around."

Seven other bills rounded out the first day of Riddle's early filings: HB 18, imposing sanctions for municipalities that allow "sanctuary cities"; HB 19, which seeks to imprison unlicensed drivers who cause serious accidents; HJR 16 and HB 23, which allow counties to set their own appraisal caps; HB 22, requiring all state agencies to determine and report their costs related to illegal aliens; HB 21, requiring school districts to report the number of illegal aliens attending their schools; and HB 20, increasing the penalty for burglary of a motor vehicle to a state jail felony.

A comprehensive approach to dealing with the problem of illegal immigration is also likely to be the most effective approach. Rep. Riddle is keeping her campaign promises; now Texans will see whether the rest of their House of Representatives will follow her lead.



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