

List fouls Utah's immigration debate; Anonymous mailing calls 1,300 illegal

USA TODAY

July 15, 2010 Thursday, FINAL EDITION

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3A

Length: 431 words

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Body

It's known as "the list," and it has Utah's Latino community in a panic.

The list -- which was mailed anonymously to federal and state agencies, legislators and news media -- contains the names and detailed personal information about 1,300 people, all with Spanish surnames. The sender says they are illegal immigrants and should be deported.

Next to the names: home addresses, phone numbers, Social Security numbers, workplaces and names of children. It lists pregnant women and their due dates.

"It's the most outrageous thing I've ever seen," says Tony Yapias, director of the Utah Latino Project, an advocacy group, and former director of the state Office of Hispanic Affairs. "This is the new level of the debate over immigration."

He says he has spoken with about 12 families on the list. Some are legal residents. All are fearful, he says, and some have asked him whether they should leave the state.

"The phone calls keep coming in with people asking, 'Is my name on the list?' " Yapias says. "This has terrorized our community."

The personal details indicate the list came from a state database, says Angie Welling, spokeswoman for Republican Gov. Gary Herbert.

Herbert told state agencies to investigate.

Welling says the type of information on the list has investigators focusing on the Department of Workforce Services, which handles Medicaid and food stamps; the Labor Commission, which oversees workplace safety; and the Department of Health. The agencies are tracing who has accessed the information recently.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement confirmed that it received the list earlier but would not say whether it is investigating the people on it.

The release of the list violates state and federal privacy laws, Welling says.

It comes as Utah considers a law similar to one in Arizona that makes it a crime to be an illegal immigrant in the state.

The Arizona law is scheduled to take effect July 29, but seven lawsuits have been filed attempting to halt it, including one by the Justice Department. Hearings are set for today and July 22.

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"The Legislature and governor of Arizona have played a part in unleashing this kind of racial hatred," says Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center, a liberal group that tracks hate groups. He says 17 states are considering similar bills.

Utah state Rep. Stephen Sandstrom, a Republican, says he plans to introduce a bill similar to the Arizona law next month.

The list is "unfortunate," he says, but it shows the level of frustration with illegal immigration. He says he expects some illegal immigrants fleeing Arizona to move to Utah.

Graphic

PHOTO, B/W, (Salt Lake City) Deseret News

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: NEWSPAPER

Subject: HISPANIC AMERICANS (90%); US STATE GOVERNMENT (90%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (89%); IMMIGRATION (89%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (89%); RACE & ETHNICITY (78%); PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE LAW (77%); LEGISLATION (77%); OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY LAW (77%); MEDICAID (77%); HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (77%); GOVERNORS (77%); SOCIAL SECURITY (76%); CHILDREN (76%); LAW ENFORCEMENT (76%); US SOCIAL SECURITY (76%); RACISM & XENOPHOBIA (76%); LITIGATION (76%); FAMILY (75%); PREGNANCY & CHILDBIRTH (75%); POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS (74%); PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (72%); SUITS & CLAIMS (72%); LIBERALISM (72%); PRIVACY RIGHTS (72%); WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY (71%); DEPORTATION (71%); WOMEN'S HEALTH (71%); JUSTICE DEPARTMENTS (70%); INVESTIGATIONS (70%); WELFARE BENEFITS (64%); POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS (64%); FOOD STAMPS (64%)

Company: SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER (63%)

Industry: MEDICAID (77%); HEALTH DEPARTMENTS (77%)

Person: GARY HERBERT (58%)

Geographic: UTAH, USA (95%); ARIZONA, USA (94%)

Load-Date: July 15, 2010