

MetroILLEGAL IMMIGRATION; Sharpton leads rally against new law

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Highlight: Hundreds gather for protest at the state Capitol.

Body

Opponents of Georgia's tough illegal immigration law descended on the state Capitol on Saturday afternoon for a rally headlined by the Rev. Al Sharpton.

More than five charter buses emptied out several hundred people for the nearly one-hour downtown Atlanta rally, where Sharpton and other speakers said House Bill 87 violates civil and human rights and will lead to racial profiling.

"America's got to work for everybody or it doesn't work for anybody," Sharpton said. "Immigration is a federal policy and it must remain on a federal level with federal enforcement."

The law's supporters say Georgia is just upholding federal immigration laws. The new rules will prevent illegal immigrants from burdening the state's taxpayer-funded public schools, hospitals and jails, proponents say.

While a federal judge has blocked two provisions of the law, other parts went into effect July 1.

Among those in effect are rules saying people who use false information or documentation to get a job could face up to 15 years in prison and up to \$250,000 in fines. The law also creates a panel to investigate complaints about local and state government officials who fail to enforce the new rules.

Just as the legal battles will continue, so will the rallies. Sharpton and others told the crowd they must return and continue the protests. Saturday's rally included members of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees.

Georgia's Hispanic population has almost doubled over the past decade to 865,689 people, according to 2010 census figures.

Estimates of the state's illegal immigration population vary, with the respected Pew Hispanic Center putting the figure last year at about 425,000.

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