

Obama Policy On Immigrants Is Challenged By Chicago

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Body

Just weeks after the Supreme Court largely reaffirmed the **Obama** administration's immigration enforcement powers in its legal battle with Arizona, federal officials are facing a new, politically tricky clash with local authorities over immigration, this time in **Chicago**.

At a news conference on Tuesday, Mayor Rahm Emanuel said he would propose an ordinance that would bar police officers from turning over illegal **immigrants** to federal agents if the **immigrants** do not have serious criminal convictions or outstanding criminal warrants.

In contrast to the **Obama** administration's long-running confrontation with officials in Arizona, who are mostly Republicans, the latest **challenge** to the president's immigration **policies** comes from Mr. Emanuel, his former chief of staff, and from other Democratic allies in President **Obama**'s hometown.

"If you have no criminal record, being part of a community is not a problem for you," Mr. Emanuel said, speaking at a high school library in Little Village, a Latino neighborhood. "We want to welcome you to the city of **Chicago**."

The mayor said the proposal was part of his goal to make **Chicago** the "most **immigrant**-friendly city in the country."

While Arizona sought to authorize the state and local police to enforce immigration laws more strictly than federal **policy**, officials in **Chicago** and surrounding Cook County want to ease the impact of enforcement on **immigrant** neighborhoods by restraining the local police and restricting the action of federal agents. The Supreme Court ruled on the Arizona law on June 25, striking down most of the controversial parts.

Mr. Emanuel's initiative came as a senior administration official in Washington stepped up the heat on Cook County, a vast Illinois jurisdiction that includes **Chicago** and nearby suburbs, where commissioners adopted an ordinance last September that sharply limited local police cooperation with federal immigration agents.

Testifying before a subcommittee in the House of Representatives, John Morton, the director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said Cook County's ordinance was "inconsistent with the terms of federal law."

That law generally bars county police and jails from detaining illegal **immigrants** to turn them over to federal agents, unless the agents have a specific warrant. It is the strongest of the "sanctuary" ordinances adopted by a handful of cities and counties nationwide, which have spared illegal **immigrants** from being held for deportation if they have committed only minor civil immigration violations.

Republicans in Congress have accused the **Obama** administration of a double standard, since it sued Arizona over its immigration efforts but has taken no action against Cook County.

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"I am quite confident their approach is ultimately going to lead to additional crimes in Cook County that would have been prevented," Mr. Morton said. He said the administration was discussing "legal options" against the county, and was likely to cut federal funds that reimburse Cook County for detaining illegal immigrants in its jails. In 2011, the county received \$2.3 million in those funds, according to official figures.

Chicago is governed separately from Cook County. The city's ordinance would give its police department more power to decide which immigrants to turn over to federal agents, but it would not curtail most cooperation as Cook County has done.

Behind the disputes in Illinois is a federal program called Secure Communities, under which local police and jail authorities share fingerprints with federal immigration agents of everyone they book. The Obama administration has rapidly expanded the program across the country, with Illinois being one of only two states -- the other is Alabama -- where it has been implemented in some jurisdictions but not statewide.

Many immigrant organizations have bitterly resisted the program, saying it erodes trust between their communities and the local police. A coalition of groups on Tuesday announced a national campaign to try to persuade more localities to ban or restrict the program.

Mr. Emanuel did not pose his initiative as a challenge to Mr. Obama. Rather he laid blame on Congress for inaction on immigration. The City Council will consider the ordinance this month.

Mr. Emanuel and police officials have been under fire for a gang problem in Chicago, with homicides up 39 percent from a year ago. The mayor said the proposed ordinance would encourage some immigrants to help the police without fear of being deported. "If you're a good citizen, immigration status is not a pause button for you to call the police department," he said.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction

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