

Illegal immigration protest draws crowd

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Byline: CARLOS CAMPOS

Body

D.A. King has held lonely protests against illegal immigration, even paying participants to hold signs and stand with him. He needed no such help Monday.

The Cobb County activist was joined at the Capitol by dozens protesting recent calls for amnesty by illegal immigrants.

King estimated that the crowd swelled to 300 at one point, though Capitol police estimated it as less than half that number.

"I don't know how many people are here today, but there's 10,000 times this many people thinking the same thing we are thinking," King told the crowd.

Many in the crowd waved American flags and held signs reading, "Illegal Aliens Are Criminals," "Enforce Our Laws," "Secure Our Borders," "Pay For Your Own Babies and Healthcare" and "Margaritas Yes Illegals No."

A few protesters wore sombreros and held inflatable characters, including a jalapeno pepper with a "No amnesty" message. A small group of counterprotesters stood across the street, at least one with a sign reading, "Go Back to Europe."

The noontime crowd roared its approval when King informed them that Gov. Sonny Perdue planned to sign Senate Bill 529 later in the day --- which he did. The measure, passed by the General Assembly in March, seeks to crack down on illegal immigrants and those who hire them.

King said he was motivated in part by the recent show of strength by Hispanics, who have taken to the streets en masse in major U.S. cities, including Atlanta. He stirred the crowd with his opening: "I am an American citizen who has had enough!"

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock), addressed the rally, as did state Reps. Melvin Everson (R-Snellville) and Matt Dollar (R-Marietta). Catherine Davis, a candidate for the 4th Congressional District seat, and John Konop, running in the 6th Congressional District, also spoke.

The crowd cheered when Rogers was introduced, chanting, "Chip! Chip! Chip!"

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The biggest reaction came when King told the **crowd** Davis was seeking to unseat incumbent U.S. Rep. Cynthia McKinney. The **crowd** cheered and applauded Davis, who further won over protesters by suggesting that **illegal** immigrants "go home."

King and other speakers emphasized that they do not oppose legal **immigration**. He introduced Maria Litland, a legal Austrian immigrant.

"That's how you come into this country," she said, holding up her green card. She called the green card "a gift," and said it was a "slap in the face to every legal immigrant ... to have any elected official let **illegal** aliens sneak into our country and allow them to remain here."

Jim Newman of Lawrenceville held up a large sign reading, "Pay For Your Own Babies and Healthcare."

"Most of us here don't have a problem with legal immigrants," said Newman, a construction contractor. "What we are here for is the illegals that don't pay their taxes."

On Saturday a mother-daughter duo from the Smyrna area held an anti-**immigration** rally at the Capitol that **drew** about 60 people.

King, who acknowledged paying 14 homeless men to hold up signs at an October **protest** at the Capitol, said he believed Monday's rally was a turning point for his movement.

"It was a very big day," said King, who first took to the streets in September 2003 with six other people. "I feel like we've passed the point where speaking about **illegal immigration** is politically incorrect. What I saw today were Americans of all colors, sizes and shapes standing up for the rule of law and secured borders in their own nation."

Graphic

Photo: JOHN SPINK / StaffMalachi Foster, 8, has had heart surgery and a kidney transplant. His mother, Lisa Morton, says immigrants are clogging the health system. Monday at the Capitol, dozens **protested** calls for amnesty for **illegal** immigrants. (Teaser)

Photo: JOHN SPINK / StaffCarlos Porter of East Point says, "I feel like we're being cheated." He was one of scores of protesters of **illegal immigration** who gathered at the Capitol on Monday at noon to make their feelings known. Activist D.A. King estimated Monday's **crowd** at 300. Police put it at less than half that.

Photo: JOHN SPINK / StaffClelland Jordan conveys his sentiments. Activist D.A. King and others said they do not oppose **immigration**, just **illegal** entry.

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