



AMERICAN GATEWAYS

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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From the Desk of Rebecca Lightsey, Co-Executive Director

As we look to our National Day of Thanksgiving, we recognize all the contributions immigrants have made to build this country. But we are saddened to see both the anti-immigrant rhetoric and new legislative measures here in Texas.

We are disheartened, but not surprised, to see two xenophobic, hateful, anti-immigrant bills come out of the Texas Capitol. Senate Bill 4 from the third Special Session and Senate Bill 4 from the fourth Special Session have both been passed by the legislature and are awaiting the Governor's signature.

The third Special Session's Senate Bill 4 dramatically raises penalties for all kinds of things misclassified as smuggling, from driving witnesses to a crime to the police station to driving a carpool to church. Racial profiling is already rampant across our state, and this dangerous proposal could encourage more over-policing and reports of smuggling that are actually just innocent Texans living their lives.

The fourth Special Session's Senate Bill 4 is even more odious. It establishes a new state crime for entering the United States "illegally" from Mexico and allows local and state law enforcement to deport undocumented immigrants to Mexico, despite the fact that many of these individuals have a right to access our federal immigration process and apply for relief. (This was HB 4 from the third Special Session.) Specifically, SB 4 makes it a state misdemeanor to illegally cross the border from Mexico into Texas, empowers Texas peace officers to arrest undocumented immigrants and requires that a state judge order the person to leave the U.S. to Mexico in lieu of prosecution, cutting off their ability to legally seek protection in the US as is given by our federal immigration laws.

Many have spoken out against this newest measure, including the Government of Mexico and more than two dozen former Immigration Judges.

“The Government of Mexico categorically rejects any measure that allows state or local authorities to detain and return nationals or foreigners to Mexican territory,” says the statement from Mexico’s secretary of foreign relations and “reiterates its rejection of any measure that contemplates the involuntary return of migrants without respect for due process.” The statement added that Mexico “recognizes the sovereign right of any country to decide the public policies that should be implemented in its territory,” but Mexico also has a right to defend the estimated 10 million people of Mexican origin in Texas and “establish its own immigration policies in its territory.”

The former Immigration Judges stated that: “Our personal politics may vary, but we dedicated our careers to the equal and fair administration of federal immigration law,” the statement said, adding that SB4 should “offend those who treasure our constitutional protections”.

The proposal has passed through both chambers and now awaits Governor Abbott’s signature. He should reject this hateful, misguided, costly proposal – otherwise the courts may need to intervene and block Senate Bill 4.

Staff Anniversaries

Join us in celebrating our staff in their work anniversaries!

[Yoana Duran Ramirez](#), Staff Attorney - 1 year

[Natalia Drelichman](#), Co-Director of Programs & Operations - 14 years

[Maureen Mercado](#), Screening, Intake and Referral Specialist - 5 years

[Leslie Parra](#), Senior Staff Attorney - 3 years

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