

California 'Sanctuary State' Bill Expands Protections For Immigrants

California lawmakers have passed a “sanctuary state” bill to protect immigrants without legal residency in the U.S.

The legislation would limit state and local law enforcement communication with federal immigration authorities, and prevent officers from questioning and holding people on immigration violations.

After passionate debate in both houses of the Legislature, staunch opposition from Republican sheriffs and threats from Trump administration officials against sanctuary cities, Senate Bill 54 was approved with a 27-11 vote along party lines. But the bill sent to Gov. Jerry Brown drastically scaled back the version first introduced.

The decision came hours after a federal judge in Chicago blocked the Trump administration's move to withhold Justice Department grant funds to discourage so-called sanctuary city policies.

Officially dubbed the “California Values Act,” the legislation initially would have prohibited state and local law enforcement agencies from using any resources to hold, question or share information about people with federal immigration agents, unless they had violent or serious criminal convictions.

After talks with Brown, amendments to the bill made this week would allow federal immigration authorities to keep working with state corrections officials and to continue entering county jails to question immigrants. The legislation would also permit police and sheriffs to share information and transfer people to immigration authorities if they have been convicted of one or more crimes from a list of 800 outlined in a previous law, the California Trust Act.

Some immigrant rights advocates who were previously disappointed with the list of offenses



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under the Trust Act, were dismayed to see the same exceptions applied in the so-called sanctuary state bill. The list includes many violent and serious crimes, as well as some nonviolent charges and “wobblers,” offenses that can be charged as a felony or misdemeanor, which advocates said has the potential to ensnare people who do not pose a danger to the public. But immigrant rights groups did not withdraw their support for Senate Bill 54 and also won some concessions. Under the additions to the bill, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation would have to develop new standards to protect people held on immigration

violations, and to allow immigrant inmates to receive credits toward their sentences served if they undergo rehabilitation and educational programs while incarcerated.

The state attorney general's office would have to develop recommendations that limit immigration agents' access to personal information. The attorney general also has broad authority under the state constitution to ensure that police and sheriffs agencies follow SB 54's provisions should it be signed into law.

De León introduced SB 54 on what was an unusually acrimonious first day of the 2017 legislative session, as lawmakers in both chambers were locked in bitter debate over the still newly elected President Trump.

It was at the center of a legislative package filed by Democrats in an attempt to protect more than 2.3 million people living in the state illegally. Other legislative proposals and budget deals have expanded workplace protections against raids from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and increased legal defense services for immigrants facing deportation and financial aid for students without legal residency.

Senate Bill 54 received national attention as the U.S. Department of Justice pledged to slash government grants for law enforcement from any so-called sanctuary cities, which limit the collaboration between local and federal authorities on immigration enforcement.

At the request of the California Senate earlier this year, former U.S. Atty. Gen. Eric H Holder Jr. reviewed the bill and said it passed constitutional muster, adding that the states “have the power over the health and safety of their residents and allocation of state resources.”

- Jazmine Ulloa

UN: U.S. Opposes Resolution Against Death Penalty & Quits UNESCO

The United Nations Human Rights Council has voted to condemn the imposition of the death penalty for consensual same-sex relations.

The U.S. was among the countries that voted against the resolution.

The 47-member Human Rights Council passed the resolution – “The question of the death penalty” – on Friday, September 29, with 27 States voting in favor, 13 against and 7 abstentions. The resolution asked countries that have not yet abolished the death penalty to ensure that it is not “applied arbitrarily or in a discriminatory manner” and that it is not applied against persons with mental or intellectual disabilities and persons below 18 years of age at the time of the commission of the crime, as well as pregnant women. It also condemns the imposition of the death penalty for apostasy, blasphemy and adultery.

There are currently six States (eight if the parts of Syria and Iraq still occupied by Isis are counted) where the death penalty is implemented for same-sex relations, a further five where it is technically allowed (if not actually invoked), and one where it has not yet been implemented.

Botswana, Burundi, Egypt, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, China, India, Iraq, Japan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates joined the U.S. in opposing it.

More than a decade ago, the now-disbanded UN Human Rights Commission passed a series of resolutions that included a call on States that still maintained the death penalty to not impose it for sexual relations between consenting adults. The United Nations General Assembly also passes a resolution every two years in New York on “extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions” where, amongst other things, it urges all States to investigate killings of persons because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. This resolution in Geneva is the first by the UN Human Rights Council – the body that replaced the Human Rights Commission – that condemns the imposition of the death penalty by a State for consensual same-sex relations.

The resolution was brought on September 29 by a group of countries from across the globe as the Human Rights Council started the final day of its 36th session. Six attempts by Egypt, Russia and Saudi Arabia to amend the resolution and dilute its impact were each defeated in often-close voting at the Geneva-based body.

The leadership of eight countries with civil society organizations pushed for this resolution – Belgium, Benin, Costa Rica, France, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia and Switzerland

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The President has been critical of the United Nations as a multilateral body, claiming it is “hobbled by bureaucracy and mismanagement.”

The U.S. has now withdrawn from UNESCO- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The withdrawal is, in part, because of what they consider an anti-Israel bias at UNESCO, and how the organization designates World

Heritage sites. The U.S. owes UNESCO about \$500 million dollars. According to the State Department, the administration will remain a “non-member observer state.”

UNESCO was created to prevent conflict, to sustain peace, preventing violent extremism through education. And intercultural dialogue.

The U.S. owes more than \$500 million to UNESCO, because it stopped paying dues to the organization in 2011 to protest UNESCO's admission of Palestine as a full member.

UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, welcomes the awarding of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. (ICAN) For its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.

“It is a resounding call to global responsibility & a stronger diplomacy for peace.”

A Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty- the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, with the goal of leading towards their total elimination was passed by the UN in July, 2017.

No nuclear-armed nation has expressed support for a ban treaty- North Korea was the only nuclear state to vote for initiating ban negotiations