

Creating a Climate of Fear: The Effects of South Carolina Immigration Legislation on Public Library Service to Latinos

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Presentation Outline

- Historical Background
- The Importance of Public Libraries
- The Legislation
- Ramifications
- Effects on Public Library Service to Latinos
- Conclusions



Historical Background

National Background

- Rise of Nativism & Xenophobia
 - U.S. Congressional attacks against the 14th Amendment
 - Publication of anti-immigration statements by well-established mainstream groups, such as the American Legion's "A Strategy to Address Illegal Immigration in the United States."

National Background

- Rise of Nativism & Xenophobia, cont.
 - Rising number of anti-immigration hate groups
 - Rising number of hate crimes against Latinos in general
 - Formation of the US Senate Border Security & Enforcement First Caucus by 10 Senators in March 2008

South Carolina Background

- Rise of Nativism & Xenophobia
 - US Senator Jim DeMint (SC) a founding member of the Border Security and Enforcement First Caucus
 - State-wide press on anti-immigrant comments from state legislators.
 - Various local attempts at anti-immigrant policies/laws.



The Importance of Public Libraries

What Public Libraries Provide

- English/Bilingual/Spanish language materials
- Computers with software & Internet access
- Career & job information
- Citizenship information & programming
- Technology education

What Public Libraries Provide

- Children's programming & materials
- Health literacy materials
- Information on government agencies & community organizations
- Outreach to child development & daycare centers
- And more!

The Legislation

Enacted Legislation

- **Act 280—Illegal Aliens Act**
 - Signed by governor June 4, 2008
 - Requires the Commission on Minority Affairs to establish & maintain a 24-hour toll-free hotline & website for “reporting immigration violations.”

Enacted Legislation

- **Act 280—Illegal Aliens**
 - Requires that every public employer participate in the Federal Work Authorization Program or otherwise verify all new employees.

Enacted Legislation

- **Act 280—Illegal Aliens**
 - Makes it a felony to transport, “conceal, harbor, or shelter” an undocumented person.
 - Requires private employers to verify the “lawful presence” of their employees.

Enacted Legislation

- **Act 280—Illegal Aliens**
 - Prohibits an undocumented person from attending or receiving financial aid at a public post-secondary institution.

Pending Legislation

- Multiple immigration-relation bills in both the House & the Senate, many in Judiciary Committees
- Examples include—
 - Requiring anyone providing immigration assistance to register (& “other requirements”) with the state.

Pending Legislation

- Other examples—
 - Prohibiting a “state or local entity” from the printing or production of non-English language written materials.
 - Requiring adults enrolling children in a school to sign affidavits verifying that the child is “lawfully present” in SC.

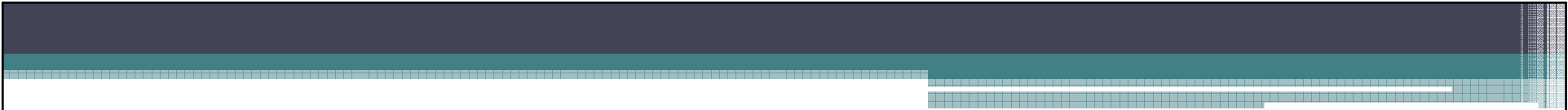
Pending Legislation

- Other examples—
 - Requiring “all state agencies & political subdivisions of the state” to offer all “services, publications, printed, audio & video materials, & test in an-English-only format unless otherwise required by Federal law.”

Ramifications

Possible Ramifications of Laws

- Immigrants may be hesitant to seek health care:
 - Spread of infectious diseases
 - Rise in infant mortality rates
 - Increase in emergency health care costs
- State-wide economy would have decreases in:
 - Work force
 - Sales tax collection
 - Consumer spending
 - Rental housing market
 - State income taxes



Effects on Public Library Services to Latinos

Library-Specific Changes

- Library staff could face charges for assisting undocumented immigrants.
- Librarians could be forced to stop collecting foreign language & bilingual materials.
- Libraries could no longer have bilingual programming.

Library-Specific Changes

- Libraries could be forced to remove foreign language signage & library card applications.
- Library staff could not speak Spanish while at work, even to interpret for Spanish-speaking patrons.

Conclusions

What LIS Professionals Can Do

- Support statements & resolutions by ALA & REFORMA to exempt public libraries from both English-only status and other anti-immigrant legislation.
- Write letters to local, state, & federal elected officials on the importance of public library services to *all* people.
- Inform others of pending & current legislation & ways they can support public libraries.