

# FLAWED ALABAMA IMMIGRATION LAW

Chief U.S. District Judge Sharon Lovelace Blackburn has restrained Alabama from enforcing an immigration law that was slated to go into effect on September 1; Judge Blackburn will rule on the merits of this injunction no later than September 28.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue explains why the law is flawed:

Every state has a right to enforce reasonable laws designed to thwart illegal immigrants from entering and settling in its communities, but the Alabama law that was scheduled to be operative on September 1 is not reasonable. Its principal flaw lay in its failure to ensure religious liberty.

When the bill was first introduced last March, its author, State Senator Scott Beason, did not allow for religious exemptions. In practical terms, this meant that “harboring” an illegal alien could be interpreted as administering the Sacraments, as well as providing material assistance. In April, an amendment was introduced by Senate Minority Leader Roger Bedford to prevent the criminalization of certain religious activities. In May, it passed in the Senate and was then forwarded to the House. When the bill reappeared on June 2, the Bedford amendment was stricken from it. The bill was then approved.

It is not every day that the Catholic League is on the same side as the ACLU, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Obama administration and the *New York Times*. But I hasten to add that those who are also protesting the bill are the Catholic bishops of Alabama, the Episcopal Church, the Methodist Church, and others. We are grateful for the information provided to us by John Whitaker, the attorney who represents the Birmingham diocese, which is ably led by Bishop Robert Baker.

The idea of punishing the clergy for doing what they are called to do—servicing those in need independent of *any* condition—is morally reprehensible and constitutionally offensive. Let the Alabama lawmakers rewrite the law, allowing for the kinds of religious exemptions stipulated by the Bedford amendment.