

From NewsChannel 8:

Hispanics Moving Out Of Oklahoma Before New Law Takes Effect

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Tulsa - Tens of thousands of Hispanics have left the Tulsa area. And, a law designed to crack down on illegal immigration hasn't even taken effect yet. But, there's a catch.

East Tulsa is where the majority of Hispanics ended up settling. They came by the thousands and now they're leaving that way, too. And, it's all because of one word -- deportation.

Business owner Simon Navarro came to America for a better life. And, he found one on Tulsa's east side.

"I have 11 years here in Tulsa," he says.

But, a tough new state law has much of Tulsa's immigrant population fleeing for fear of deportation.

"Two months ago I heard 25-thousand Hispanics have left Oklahoma," Navarro says.

That is about 30-percent of Oklahoma's Hispanic population.

"They are leaving. A lot have already left."

Francisco Trevino runs Tulsa's Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He says the exodus hurts a lot of people working in a lot of fields.

"I think restaurants, construction, lawn care they do everything we don't want to do," he says.

It's making it hard for local companies to find workers. But, officials are standing firm. If they are here illegally, it's a one way trip home.

And, the Tulsa County Sheriff's Office is doing its part to move things along. This week, they're training deputies to handle the deportation process. And word is spreading quickly. Simon has already said a lot of goodbyes.

"People are leaving," he says. "They're scared of the sheriff."

In the end, Trevino says it hurts everyone.

The American citizens in the state of Oklahoma suffer. It's as simple as that."

There is a large group of people on the other side who believe the new law, which takes effect in November, is a good idea.

Most illegal immigrants are ending up in either Kansas or Arkansas. But, that may not be for long. Arkansas is about to adopt a law like Oklahoma's. Kansas is considering the same thing.

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[previous page](#)

