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Oklahoma's Brand of Immigration Reform Barely Makes News; Guess Why?

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The Formerly Mainstream Media is favorably transfixed on the proposed immigration "reforms" being whipped through Congress -- legislation that opponents characterize as "amnesty [1]."

"Somehow," they have managed to virtually ignore immigration-related legislation that has actually become law in Oklahoma.

Perhaps it's because Oklahoma's reforms have nothing to do with "amnesty," and everything to do with enforcement.

Specifically [2], from a May 8 Associated Press story on the bill's passage:

Governor Henry today signed a sweeping immigration reform bill that was passed overwhelmingly by the Oklahoma Legislature, but described it as a stopgap measure until the federal government takes action on the issue.

Among other things, the bill contains employment, labor law and civil rights provisions to protect citizens and legal immigrants who lose their jobs at companies that employ illegal immigrants to perform the same or similar work.

Beginning in November, public agencies will be required to use a program that screens Social Security numbers to make sure they are real and that they match up with a job applicant's name.

A One News Now story [3] provided more detail. It also makes it clear that the sponsor of the legislation believes that the states have more power to enforce immigration law than the "it's the Feds' problem" types would like us to believe (bold is mine):

House Bill 1804 was passed by overwhelming majorities in both the House and Senate of the Oklahoma Legislature. The measure's sponsor, State Representative Randy Terrill, says the bill has four main topical areas: it deals with identity theft; it terminates public assistance benefits to illegals; it empowers state and local police to enforce federal immigration laws; and it punishes employers who knowingly hire illegal aliens.

Oklahoma is no longer "O.K." for illegal aliens, Terrill observes. "When you put everything together in context," he contends, "the bottom line is illegal aliens will not come here if there are no jobs waiting for them, they will not stay here if there is no government subsidy, and they certainly won't stay here if they know that if they ever encounter our state and local law enforcement officers, they will be physically detained until they're deported. And that's exactly what House Bill 1804 does."

The Oklahoma legislator is pleased the bill he sponsored into law was signed by Governor Henry and believes it will go a long way to curb the illegal immigration problem in the state. **"I would remind people that states are separate sovereigns in our federal system," Terrill points out. "Anyone who doesn't understand that needs to go back and take an American federal government class in college," he says.**

It should be noted that Governor Brad Henry, a Democrat, at first waffled [4], but did sign. But he attempted to downplay the legislation's significance, especially the state-sovereignty issue brought up by Representative Terrill, saying that [5] "States can take some actions on their own, but until the U.S. Congress enacts a comprehensive, national immigration policy, citizens will see little progress on this issue."

Press coverage of the news from Oklahoma has ranged from non-existent to barely concealing writers' opposition to what has taken place:

- The New York Times had no story [6] (search is on "Oklahoma immigration" without quotes).
- A Houston Chronicle report [7] by Kim Cobb fretted over "the ripples it may cast," including a worry that it might "provide a license to discriminate against anyone who appears Hispanic."
- A longer version of the AP story [8] cited above said that immigration groups "are considering a challenge to the new law's constitutionality, saying that immigration policy is the domain of the federal government, not the state."

Representative Terrill's bold assertion of states' rights may explain why federal government-favoring Old Media and the Washington establishment are virtually ignoring what has just happened in Oklahoma (the AP story made relatively few appearances outside the Southwest). I would suggest that politicians ignore it at their peril.

Cross-posted at [BizzyBlog.com](http://bizzyblog.com) [9].

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[1] <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=NDEyMDU5NDVhNzAzOTRmODQ0OGVkJEzOTk4ZDc5ZTA=>

[2] <http://kotv.com/news/topstory/?id=126903>

[3] http://www.onenewsnow.com/2007/05/oklahoma_no_longer_ok_for_ille.php

[4] <http://www.kotv.com/news/local/story/?id=126472>

[5] <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,270963,00.html>

[6] <http://query.nytimes.com/search/query?query=oklahoma+immigration&srchst=nyt>

[7] <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/nation/4790790.html>

[8] http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/national/1110AP_Immigration_Oklahoma.html

[9] <http://www.bizzyblog.com/2007/05/19/oklahomas-brand-of-immigration-reform-barely-makes-news-guess-why/>