Speaking Out On Arizona’s “Show Me Your Papers” Law

Next week the Supreme Court will hear arguments challenging Arizona’s immigration enforcement law — commonly known as “SB 1070” — one of the nation’s harshest anti-immigrant laws. Social justice advocates have a great deal at stake in this case, as it underscores the need for all of our laws to uphold our country’s values, not pander to a narrow agenda that promotes discrimination and threatens all of our basic rights, particularly around equal treatment and racial profiling.

We hope you consider sharing these concerns with your audiences through blog posts, media work, Facebook, and Twitter, as well as other venues. The issues that immigrants are currently facing illustrate how our many issues come together. We can’t let any group be marginalized and harassed in the ways that this law encourages. And we know that these laws affect more than just immigrants: all of our rights are at stake.

Below is some basic guidance for talking about the case. Based on recent public opinion research, this guidance incorporates messaging ideas developed by a communications strategy group organized by America’s Voice and other immigration groups. It is designed to highlight the importance of protecting our rights and standing up to legislation that promotes un-American values.

- Audiences: We need to energize groups and individuals who care about civil and human rights, progressive issues, and racial justice, in addition to those who are already mobilized around immigration issues. We need to send a message to state legislators that these types of laws won’t be tolerated and to tell representatives in Congress that they must pass immigration reform legislation.

- At The Opportunity Agenda, we recommend that advocates organize immigration messages around a narrative rooted in three main thematic pillars: we need common sense immigration policies that uphold our values, but laws like this are bad for all of us.

  This law concerns us because it promotes discrimination based on the way people look and speak, which is un-American and violates our values. This law promotes discrimination against all people of color, including those who have been American citizens all their lives.

  The Supreme Court should strike down this law, which threatens our values and promotes an approach that is unworkable, not common sense. Encouraging discrimination in any form hurts us all.

  We need a common sense approach to fix our immigration policies at the federal level, not encourage a confusing patchwork of state legislation.

- One way to organize messages is under the Value, Problem, Solution, Action structure:

  Value:
  Americans believe that we all deserve equal treatment under the law, regardless
of where we come from or what we look like.

Problem:
The Arizona law encourages discrimination (racial profiling) against people just because of the way they look or speak, even if they have been American citizens all their lives. This violates our most basic values.

Solution:
In order to protect our basic (or civil) rights, the Supreme Court needs to strike down this law so the United States can establish one national law on immigration, not a confusing patchwork of 50 different ones. As we’ve seen throughout our nation’s history, it is the federal government – rather than the states – that is best suited to protect our basic right to equal treatment under the law.

Action:
- Write letters to the editor and blog posts, and use traditional forms of media as well as social media, to express opposition to SB 1070 and urge states to implement positive policies that recognize the contributions of immigrants to their local communities and better integrate them into their communities.
- Participate in local and national activities leading up to, on the day of, and following the Supreme Court hearing on SB 1070 on April 25th.

Value:
We may have come on different ships, but we are all in the same boat now. Our greatness comes from aspiring to be one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. America was founded on the idea that all men and women are created equal, no matter what they look like or where they come from.

Problem:
The Arizona “show me your papers” law dishonors these principles.

Solution:
Our country desperately needs new immigration laws that move us forward as a nation. That’s why Congress needs to do its job and pass federal immigration legislation, and the Supreme Court needs to prevent states from enacting discriminatory laws like SB 1070.

Action:
- Urge state and local legislators to express opposition to SB 1070 and to pass pro-immigrant laws that protect wages for all workers, allow immigrant students who graduate from high school to attend college at in-state tuition rates, expand English classes, and encourage citizenship.
- Urge Congress to pass new immigration legislation.

For more information about this case, please visit:
http://www.nilc.org/USvAZamici.html
http://amvoice.3cdn.net/24297aa1ef0b70a5d9_p4m6i6p4r.pdf