

# **Voces de La Frontera: Dairy, ag, community leaders hold people's hearing to urge legislators to reject Wisconsin's Anti-Immigrant Bill AB190**

Posted on Thursday, Sep 28, 2017

**>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: Sam Singleton-Freeman, 414-469-9206, [sfreeman@vdlf.org](mailto:sfreeman@vdlf.org)

MADISON, WISCONSIN – On Wednesday, over 200 immigrant community members, farmers, and religious leaders from across Wisconsin met at the Capitol in Madison to urge legislators to oppose the anti-immigrant bill AB190/SB275 (factsheet [here](#)). The bill would give sweeping powers to local law enforcement and public employees to interrogate, arrest, and deport immigrant community members. The bill would require local law enforcement to comply with unconstitutional ICE detainer requests. The bill is a copycat of Texas' SB4, and is very similar to the anti-immigrant bill defeated last year through the Day without Latinxs and Immigrants of February 2016.

The event, known as the People's Hearing to Stop AB190, was organized by Voces de la Frontera, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice, Family Farm Defenders, and Centro Hispano of Dane County, and was attended by 15 legislators or their staff. Afterwards constituents visited the offices of key committee members Rep. Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville), Rep. David Steffen (R-Green Bay), and Sen. Frank Lasee (R-De Pere) to urge them to attend a town hall meeting on the bill and to vote against it. Speakers also urged legislators to support a bill soon to be introduced by Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa (D-Milwaukee) to return driver licenses to immigrants.

“One night when I was 7 years old, we got a phone call that changed my life forever,” said Isabel Martinez, 13, of Manitowoc. “It was my dad saying he was picked up by ICE. This started a month of strange visits to far away places to see my dad behind glass. After these exhausting, heartbreaking visits, we went one last time to see my dad. On a cold and rainy day we pushed through a crowd of praying, sobbing families into a small room and to my surprise there was my dad. I ran toward him, but a guard scolded me to not touch him. I watched as my dad was taken from me and chained to a line of other mothers and fathers. ‘Don’t forget me’ he called as he was pushed onto a bus. It has been almost 6 years since I have felt my dad’s arms around me. The pain that I carry will never go away. So if you think of passing evil laws like AB190 that help separate families, I hope that first you think of me, and of the millions of kids like me left to pick up the pieces.”

“AB190 would be a step backward,” said Fr. Jim Murphy, the pastor of St. Thomas Catholic Church in Montfort. “Our local public servants are charged to protect our health and safety. Our new neighbors should not be made to live in fear that interaction with law enforcement, health or social service workers, or school officials could lead to separation from their families.”

Fr. Murphy also read a letter from Iowa County Sheriff Steven Michek to his Representative, Todd Novak, asking him to oppose AB190 and support returning driver licenses to immigrants. “The issue for Sheriffs is how they can lawfully hold someone beyond their state charges for 48 hours for ICE to take physical custody of the person without violating their constitutional rights,” said Sheriff Michek in his letter. “Case law around the country has found that prolonged detention without probable cause or warrant is unconstitutional. I do not believe there are protections substantive enough to protect local law enforcement from constitutional challenge that can cost my agency and the citizens of the county. On a separate issue which is just as complex, I believe there should be a way for a person who does not have citizenship to have a valid permit of some type to drive.”

“Speaking as someone from Texas, I want to urge Wisconsin to not pass AB190,” said Myrna Orozco Gallos, a Houston-based organizer with Church World Services. “Since SB4 was passed in Texas, we’ve seen people’s trust of law enforcement completely erode. After the hurricane, community members were not able to seek the help they needed because of SB4. People weren’t going to shelters out of fear. We’re also facing serious economic trouble. Texas is poised to lose \$13 billion because of SB4. Children are at risk of being asked about immigration status. Please heed our warning and don’t pass this dangerous and draconian legislation.”

“To ignore the contributions of immigrants to our society, the economy, and community life is to deny how America became America,” said Wilda Nilsestuen, former Executive Director of the Council of Rural Initiatives and the Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin. “It shows ignorance of how this country can move forward. These bills are inciting fear among immigrants. Instead we need to again make driver licenses available to immigrants.”

“I came to this country with my husband when I was 19 in 1999,” said Lisa Esquivel, of Unidos por un Futuro Mejor in Appleton. “We have taken the limited opportunities we have as undocumented people and become stable, contributing members of our community who give back. My husband has worked as an auto mechanic for 15 years. The entire time I’ve been here I’ve worked part-time and raised 5 children, and I hope this year to obtain my GED from Fox Valley Tech. We oppose AB190 because it would discriminate against the most vulnerable people in society. We seek laws that are just. Trump says he is going to make America great again, but he forgets that we are America too. And that is why we are going to fight. As Jorge Ramos says, we will not stay sitting down, we will not leave, and we will not be quiet.

“I cannot understand why we are attacking people who add so much to the fabric of our community economically and culturally,” said Nick Levandofsky, Government Relations Associate with the Wisconsin Farmers’ Union. “AB190 would mean that all the immigration craziness we have seen at the federal level would be the directive for local law enforcement as well. Let the craziness stay in Washington and let’s keep some measure of stability here at home.”