



DRIVING FORCE BEHIND ARIZONA'S 'SHOW ME YOUR PAPERS' LAW DEAD AT 75 - ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Photo: Former Arizona state Sen. Russell Pearce, the architect of Arizona's controversial immigration law S.B. 1070, left, accompanied by former Arizona Sen. Dennis DeConcini, testifies on Capitol Hill on April 24, 2012

Russell Pearce, a Republican lawmaker who was the driving force behind Arizona's landmark 2010 immigration legislation known as the "show me your papers" law and other anti-immigrant measures, has died. He was 75.

Pearce's family said on social media that he died Thursday at his home in Mesa, Arizona, after falling ill.

Pearce rose to brief national prominence more than a decade ago while advocating for tougher border policies for Arizona, one of the busiest hubs for illegal immigration in the United States. He was the lead sponsor of Senate Bill 1070, which required law enforcement officers to inquire about suspects' immigration status if they had reason to believe they were in the U.S. illegally.

It was the toughest anti-immigration law in the nation and prompted calls for organizations to cancel conventions in Phoenix, a huge source of income for Arizona's largest city.

Activists in the city's rapidly growing Latino community criticized Pearce for portraying immigrants as lawbreakers. The controversy over the law ultimately fueled the creation of local civil rights groups that registered growing numbers of Hispanic U.S. citizens to vote and become involved in their neighborhoods.

But SB 1070 also tapped into the fears and frustrations of others about the porous southern border and the possible effects immigration could have on their lives in metro Phoenix.

Legal challenges were filed over SB 1070's constitutionality and its compliance with civil rights law., with detractors arguing that the law encouraged the racial profiling of Latinos. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the provision requiring immigration status checks during law enforcement stops but struck down three other provisions.

Pearce earlier backed other anti-immigration measures, including a voter-approved law that denied bail to immigrants who were in the U.S. illegally and charged with a range of felonies that included shoplifting, aggravated identity theft, sexual assault and murder. That 2006 law was later struck down by an 11-member panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for violating due process rights by imposing punishment before trial.

Another law punished employers who hired workers who were in the U.S. illegally, drawing protests from business owners and prompting droves of immigrants to flee to other states or return to their home countries.

"Why in the world do (immigrants in the U.S. illegally) think they have a right to break the law?" Pearce was quoted as saying in a 2008 Associated Press article. "And we are the bad guys for insisting that the law be enforced? The public doesn't agree with that."

Amid changing demographics in Arizona, fierce community opposition to Pearce's measures sparked a November 2011 recall election that ousted him from the state Senate, where he served as president. The year after he became the first person ever recalled from the Arizona Legislature, Pearce lost a comeback bid in the Republican primary for a state Senate seat.

Before he was elected to the Arizona House of Representatives in 2000, then later the Senate, Pearce worked many years for the Maricopa County sheriff's office, rising to become chief deputy to then-Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was nationally known for his anti-immigration policies.

Pearce at one point even claimed credit for Arpaio's infamous complex of jail tents.

"My condolences go out to the family, friends, and many supporters of Russell Pearce, a patriot, law enforcement official, and Arizona state senate president, who passed away today," Arpaio wrote on his Facebook account. "He served with honor and integrity at the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. I'm proud to have appointed him as my chief deputy. He will be sorely missed."

Pearce later served as director of the Arizona Motor Vehicle Division and more recently worked for the Maricopa County Treasurer's Office.

There was no immediate word on funeral arrangements.

Associated Press writer Jacques Billeaud contributed to this report.