



# HOUSE PANEL ADVANCES GOP PLAN TO CHECK CITIZENSHIP OF WELFARE RECIPIENTS - CRONKITE NEWS

Posted on February 20, 2024 by Reagan Priest | Cronkite News



*Photo: House Speaker Ben Toma, backed by fellow GOP lawmakers Monday, talks about his bill that would force local governments to check the citizenship status of anyone receiving welfare benefits or state licensing – a measure critics are calling “SB 1070 2.0.” (Photo by Reagan Priest/Cronkite News)*

Arizona Republicans want to make it harder for undocumented immigrants to receive state benefits, and they plan to bypass the governor to do so.

The House Appropriations Committee, on a party-line vote, gave preliminary approval to House Speaker Ben Toma’s proposal to require cities, towns and agencies to use E-Verify to check the citizenship status of anyone applying for public welfare benefits or a license of any kind.

Currently, businesses in the state are required to use the federal [E-Verify](#) system to check the immigration status of potential employees to make sure they are authorized to work in the United States.

“We may not be able to do the federal government’s job, but we can definitely stop Arizona from becoming like California,” said Toma, a Glendale Republican. “Our message to illegal immigrants is if you want to take advantage of Americans, go somewhere else.”

But critics panned [the resolution](#) that they say is just one of a group of bills that have been dubbed “SB 1070 2.0,” a reference to Arizona’s controversial “show me your papers” bill from 2010 that allowed police to demand proof of citizenship from suspects.

All the Democrats on the committee voted against the legislation. Rep. Oscar De Los Santos, D-Laveen, called the resolution “bad policy.”

“I think you’re going to see some strong opposition to that,” De Los Santos said of the proposal. “We’re seeing a wave of attacks, that I think are politically motivated, on immigrants. And as we saw with [SB 1070](#), it has devastating economic impacts on our state and on our economy.”

Unlike a bill, the resolution would be put before voters this fall if it passes the Legislature, avoiding the likelihood of a veto by Gov. Katie Hobbs. Besides requiring that local governments and agencies use E-Verify for public benefits, [the resolution](#) would expand the number of

businesses subject to the law and would make it a crime to help an undocumented immigrant bypass or obstruct the system.

At a news conference backed by several fellow Republican lawmakers Monday, Toma said the resolution is his response to the federal government's lack of action on border issues.



According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, individuals applying for public benefits are [already required](#) to provide proof of citizenship or legal status under both federal and state law. It also says that there are a few public programs that undocumented immigrants are eligible for, including emergency disaster relief, Women, Infants, and Children benefits, and some federal aid programs.

The other "SB 1070 2.0" bills would make illegal immigration and border crossings state crimes, moves that would allow local and state authorities to take the place of federal enforcement. Hobbs would likely veto any of those measures.

Toma said at the news conference that he is confident the bill will make it out of the Legislature.

But Rep. Marcelino Quiñonez, D-Phoenix, said at [Monday's hearing](#) that perspectives have shifted since SB 1070 was passed in 2010 and he does not believe voters will approve this plan if it makes it to the ballot.

"I am confident that individuals out in the community are going to continue to do the work, to organize, to galvanize, to make sure that this kind of rhetoric and these kinds of policies don't become law in Arizona," Quiñonez said.