

Arizona: The Key Players in the Anti-Immigrant Movement

On April 25, 2012, [the Supreme Court heard the constitutionality](#) of Arizona's strict anti-immigration legislation, "Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act," otherwise known as S.B. 1070. The Court struck down some of the statute's most restrictive provisions, while letting stand a section that directs local law enforcement officers to check an individual's immigration status when they stop the person for violating the law and have a "reasonable suspicion" that the individual may be undocumented.

Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed S.B. 1070 into law in April 2010. Among other things, S.B. 1070 required local law police to enforce immigration laws; made it a state crime for immigrants to be in the state without carrying their papers, and made it a crime to hire, rent to, or transport an undocumented person.

It is important to understand the environment in Arizona that led to the creation of S.B. 1070. The law evolved in an atmosphere of anti-immigrant sentiment and rhetoric that made the state the center of activity for anti-immigrant activists and lawmakers such as Russell Pearce, former Arizona State Senator, and Kris Kobach, currently the Secretary of State of Kansas, the co-authors of S.B. 1070. Kobach is also "of counsel" to the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI), the legal arm of the [Federation of American Immigration Reform](#) (FAIR). FAIR is the largest and most active anti-immigrant organization in the United States.

Another major anti-immigrant figure in Arizona is Sheriff Joe Arpaio, the sheriff of Maricopa County (Phoenix) who is known for his hard-line stance against Latino immigrants. The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) investigated Arpaio's activities, including racial profiling of Latinos, and issued a critical report in December 2011. As discussed in greater detail below, further DOJ action is still possible.

In addition, Arizona is home to a number of anti-immigrant activists with more extreme views, including J.T. Ready, a white supremacist who murdered a number of people in May 2012 before killing himself, and Glenn Spencer, the head of American Border Patrol, an anti-Hispanic hate group.

All of these figures have played a role in making Arizona the "ground zero" of the anti-immigrant movement and in allowing S.B. 1070 to come to fruition.

Key Players

Russell Pearce

Pearce is currently vice-chairman of the Arizona Republican Party and president of Ban Amnesty Now, a Tempe, Arizona-based organization that is against providing amnesty to undocumented immigrants. In November 2011, in an unprecedented action, voters recalled Pearce from office, where he had been serving as the president of the Arizona State Senate since January 2011 and as a State Senator since 2008. The voters were reacting, in part, to Pearce's focus on S.B. 1070 and other immigration measures. Pearce is known for his harsh anti-immigrant stance. Before writing S.B. 1070 with Kris Kobach, the two had worked together on other anti-immigrant initiatives in Arizona.

In addition to S.B. 1070, Pearce has authored legislation to require proof of citizenship to vote; to make English the official language in Arizona, and to carry out sanctions against employees who hire undocumented workers. In March 2011, he tried to pass legislation that would have stripped the citizenship of children born to undocumented immigrants; banned undocumented immigrants from state universities; made it a crime for undocumented immigrants to drive a vehicle in Arizona; required schools to check the legal status of students, and required hospitals to check the legal status of patients. Each of these bills was defeated in the Arizona Senate in March 2011.

Pearce also had a long-term association with neo-Nazi J.T. Ready, which began in the mid-2000s when Ready emerged as a conservative Republican and an outspoken proponent of Protect Arizona Now (PAN), the first anti-immigration legislation in Arizona. The PAN legislation, which required individuals to produce proof of citizenship before they could register to vote or apply for public benefits, was drafted by Pearce. Pearce continued to associate with Ready even after the Anti-Defamation League office informed Pearce in 2006 that Ready had become a neo-Nazi.

Pearce even shared the podium with Ready during an anti-immigration protest at the Arizona State Capitol in June 2007 after Ready was "outed" as a neo-Nazi by a local newspaper. Pearce claimed that he did not know about Ready's extremist views. He has since cut his ties to Ready.

Pearce has used inflammatory rhetoric to describe the undocumented immigrants in this country. In a February 2007 article in the *Conservative Heritage Times*, he made several demeaning and unsubstantiated assertions about undocumented immigrants, attributing more deaths to them each year than the number of people who died at Pearl Harbor or in the September 11 terrorist attacks. He also accused undocumented immigrants of creating a "mass invasion" and of running through backyards and "breaking down fences, slaughtering cattle, cutting... dogs' throats if they bark, and terrifying people."

A year earlier, in 2006, Pearce angered the Hispanic community when he called for the reinstatement of "Operation Wetback," a 1950s government program that apprehended and deported illegal Mexican immigrants from the United States. The term "wetback" is a derogatory phrase used against Hispanics, primarily Mexicans.

Kris Kobach

Kobach has been the Secretary of State of Kansas since November 2010. Both before and after the passage of S.B. 1070, he has been involved in helping locales across the country draft anti-immigrant initiatives. For example, he has drafted legislation in a number of states against in-state tuition laws that allow undocumented students to receive tuition aid. Due to the extent of his anti-immigrant activity, a local group in Kansas has published a report that questions whether Kobach is carrying out the duties of his office.

Kobach has a long history of associating with FAIR and IRLI. Both FAIR and IRLI blame immigrants for various problems in the United States, from committing crimes to creating slums, triggering environmental problems, and causing businesses and schools to discriminate against American workers and students. FAIR has dedicated many of its resources to supporting anti-immigrant legislation and sponsoring studies that show the detrimental effects of immigration on the United States.

In February 2012, IRLI and Kobach filed separate amicus briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court regarding S.B. 1070 litigation. Both briefs made the argument that the three challenged provisions of S.B.1070 comply with federal immigration law.

In addition to his work with FAIR and IRLI, Kobach has promoted his own anti-immigrant theories. For example he believes in the concept of "self-deportation" (the idea that undocumented immigrants will leave the U.S. voluntarily if life is made too difficult to stay). In a February 2012 interview with the online publication *Salon*, he asserted, "If we had a true nationwide policy of self-deportation, I believe we would see our illegal alien population cut in half at a minimum very quickly."

Kobach clearly believes that the anti-immigrant measures he has been pushing will lead to self-deportation. In addition, to S.B. 1070, he was also one of the authors of Alabama's H.B. 56, the strictest anti-immigration law in the nation. It went into effect in September 2011. The law, which has had a devastating effect on the Hispanic community in that state, had stipulations that required schools to inquire about the immigration status of children enrolled in schools; allowed local police to check immigration status during routine stops, and made it illegal to sign a contract with undocumented immigrants, to knowingly rent property to them, or to knowingly hire them for jobs. The law is being challenged and some portions have been temporarily blocked by a federal court, including provisions related to harboring or transporting undocumented immigrants or barring undocumented immigrants from soliciting work. In addition, the law had such a detrimental impact on the image and business in the state that lawmakers are considering revising parts of it.

In addition, Kobach joined State Legislators for Legal Immigration (a nationwide coalition of state legislators who want to pass laws that would deter undocumented immigrants from coming to the U.S.) at a press conference in early January 2011. At the conference, lawmakers from a number of states discussed their strategies for changing the 14th Amendment and getting the Supreme Court to weigh in on the issue of U.S. citizenship. The lawmakers wanted to prevent children born to undocumented workers in the United States from automatically receiving U.S. citizenship, as is now the case. The lawmakers also discussed giving the states the power to decide who should receive citizenship, a move that would certainly be challenged by the federal government.

Kobach has also tried to provide training to law enforcement on issues related to immigration. Although his services were rejected by numerous localities, Joe Arpaio, the Arizona sheriff known for his anti-immigrant views, hired Kobach from February to May 2010 to train law enforcement in Maricopa County. Kobach's contract with the sheriff's department led to an outcry from community groups concerned about Kobach's anti-immigrant bias.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio

Sheriff Arpaio, who has been the sheriff in Maricopa County (Phoenix) since 1992, is known for implementing law enforcement policies, including "crime sweeps" and traffic stops, which have targeted Latinos.

After a preliminary inquiry into the discriminatory practices of Sheriff Arpaio and the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) in June 2008, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) began an official investigation of MCSO in March 2009. DOJ's December 2011 report cited Arpaio and MCSO for racial profiling and violating the civil rights of Latinos. According to the report, MCSO unlawfully stopped, detained, and arrested Latinos. The report also found that MCSO routinely punished Latinos in jail who did not understand English by denying them access to critical services.

In addition, the report found that there were other areas that warranted further investigation. These included MCSO personnel using excessive force against Latinos and implementing an "immigration enforcement program" in such a way as to create "a wall of distrust" in the Latino community that "significantly compromised" MCSO's ability to provide police protection to Latino residents.

Throughout the investigation, Arpaio and MCSO were uncooperative and DOJ had to file a lawsuit against MCSO to gain access to documents and personnel. In April 2012, Sheriff Arpaio rejected a settlement with DOJ, which would have required an independent monitor to oversee his department. After the breakdown in talks with Arpaio, DOJ has threatened to once again sue MCSO.

In addition to actions that have targeted Latinos, Sheriff Arpaio has made disparaging comments about Latinos and promoted the conspiracy theory that Mexican-Americans are plotting to take over parts of the United States. In a 2008 autobiography titled *Joe's Law*, Arpaio asserted, "My parents, like all other immigrants exclusive of those from Mexico, held to certain hopes and truths," and then claimed that unlike previous immigrants, Mexicans in the Southwest make no effort to assimilate into American society. He also warned of "a growing movement among not only Mexican nationals but also some Mexican-Americans," contending "that the United States stole the territory that is now California, Arizona and Texas, and that massive immigration over the border will speed the *reconquista* of these lands, returning them to Mexico."

Arpaio also asserted, "No other group except the Mexicans, and other Hispanics as well, has broken the immigration laws in such astonishing numbers."

J.T. Ready

[J.T. Ready](#) was a well-known anti-immigrant extremist and white supremacist in Arizona. In May 2012, Ready shot and killed four people before killing himself. Ready's recent activities included vigilante patrols on the Arizona border with members of the [National Socialist Movement](#) (NSM), the country's largest neo-Nazi organization. Ready joined the NSM in 2008, but had left the group. He claimed to no longer be a neo-Nazi but still espoused racist and anti-Semitic views. He continued to attend rallies held by the NSM in different parts of the country. He participated in anti-immigrant rallies held by the group in Pomona, California in November, 2011, in Phoenix in May 2010 and in Los Angeles in April 2010.

After the passage of S.B. 1070, Ready formed a new extremist organization called "US Border Guard" (the group had no connection to the U.S. government), which carried out a number of armed patrols on the U.S./Mexican border between 2010 and 2012. The group's first official "border operation" took place in June 2010. Ready, accompanied by nine other heavily armed individuals, assembled to conduct a patrol operation he claimed was to target "armed narco-terrorists... bringing loads of chemical warfare into our nation." He stated that the operation would be "like the [Minutemen](#) on steroids."

Ready was also active in a number of rallies in Phoenix in the spring of 2010. In May of that year, he showed up armed at a rally that attracted thousands of people who marched in Phoenix to oppose the passage of S.B. 1070. Earlier in the month, on May 5, 2010 (Cinco de Mayo), when Mexican-Americans celebrate their heritage, the Arizona chapter of NSM, along with Ready, handed out "Report an Illegal Day" fliers. The flier promoted NSM's extremist rhetoric about non-white immigrants, and was clearly directed at Hispanics, particularly Mexicans. A month earlier, in April, Ready was one of a handful of NSM members, sporting weapons, who appeared at a rally where Sheriff Arpaio was supporting a local candidate. The neo-Nazis reportedly said that they were there to show support for Arpaio. Both Arpaio and the candidate distanced themselves from the neo-Nazis.

Ready also participated in a high-profile NSM event in May 2009 when Latinos organized a "Walk for Respect" march to oppose the policies of Sheriff Arpaio. Ready and other NSM members showed up at the march, gave Nazi salutes, shouted "Sieg Heil" and yelled derogatory remarks at the crowd while stomping on the Mexican flag.

Ready publicly revealed himself to be a neo-Nazi in September 2007 when he spoke at an NSM protest at the Mexican Consulate in Omaha, Nebraska. Prior to that event, he had attended or organized

various white supremacist and neo-Nazi events, but kept those activities out of the public's eye.

Before he became an open neo-Nazi, Ready ran for a series of offices in Arizona and succeeded in 2006 in securing the position of Maricopa County Republican precinct committeeman. He held that position until he was expelled for handing out anti-Semitic and racist literature at a Republican committee event in 2008.

Prior to that time, Ready held positions in a number of anti-immigrant extremist organizations including United for a Sovereign America, which hosted numerous anti-immigrant events, some featuring white supremacists as guest speakers. He was also a spokesman for the Minuteman Project, an armed vigilante group that patrolled the Arizona-Mexico border reporting undocumented immigrants entering from Mexico into the United States. Highly publicized, the [Minutemen](#) attracted a variety of anti-immigrant activists, including extremists ranging from militia members to white supremacists. During his time with the Minutemen, Ready produced a video advocating the placement of minefields across the border.

Glenn Spencer

Glenn Spencer is the head of American Border Patrol (ABP), an anti-Hispanic hate group. [Spencer](#) regularly does video surveillance of the Mexican-American border from his ranch in Sierra Vista, Arizona.

Spencer also runs two Web sites: American Border Patrol and American Patrol. The American Border Patrol, the tamer of the two Web sites, talks about ABP's surveillance activities and presents ABP as a benign non-profit organization that monitors the border. On the other hand, the American Patrol Web site features numerous articles by Spencer or his commentary on articles that have appeared elsewhere. Many of the articles and commentary contain anti-Mexican rhetoric and promote the *reconquista* or Aztlan conspiracy theory that Mexicans in this country are plotting to take over the Southwestern part of the United States.

In addition to spouting anti-Hispanic rhetoric, Spencer has attended white supremacist events hosted by [American Renaissance](#) and the [Council of Conservative Citizens](#).

Despite his bigoted views, Spencer presents himself as an authority on immigration. On March 1, 2012, [he spoke in front of the Arizona State Senate's Border Security Committee](#). Last year, in March 2011, he was scheduled to speak to the same committee but was "uninvited" after objections from the Anti-Defamation League and others.

Throughout 2012, Spencer has hosted visitors who are participating in the Arizona 2012 Project, an

affiliate of the Tea Party Patriots. Arizona 2012 Project takes various people, including politicians, on a tour of the Arizona border. The tour includes a stop at Spencer's ranch and a briefing by Spencer.

Spencer has also become increasingly involved in the Tea Party movement. In August 2010, he hosted a Tea Party Nation gathering at his ranch. The event attracted 600 people, and included then-Senator Russell Pearce and Sheriff Joe Arpaio as speakers. Two months earlier, in June, Spencer was the co-host of a rally in Phoenix in support of S.B. 1070. The rally featured a number of anti-immigrant speakers, including Barbara Coe, who is the head of California Coalition for Immigration Reform (CCIR), another anti-Hispanic hate group.

Spencer has also been linked to border vigilante extremist [Shawna Forde](#). Forde received the death penalty in 2011 for her role in the May 2009 murders of Raul Junior Flores and his nine-year-old daughter Brisenia during a home invasion in Arivaca, Arizona. Authorities arrested Forde for the murders in June 2009, shortly after she left Spencer's property where she had stopped to send emails from her laptop. Spencer had apparently allowed Forde to live on his property in 2008, but claimed that he told her afterwards that she was no longer welcome at the ranch.