

Clinton Speaks On New Arizona Immigration Law

BY AMANDA LEE MYERS
Associated Press Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer said Thursday she's angry over comments by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton that the Obama administration will sue the state over its new immigration law.

In a June 8 media interview in Ecuador that began circulating Thursday in the U.S., Clinton said President Barack Obama thinks the federal government should determine immigration policy and that the Justice Department "will be bringing a lawsuit against the act."

Justice spokeswoman Tracy Schmalzer on Thursday declined to say whether the department would sue and that "the department continues to review the law."

The department has been looking at the law for weeks for possible civil rights violations, with an eye toward a possible court challenge.

It's unclear why Clinton made the comment since it's not her area. She couldn't be reached Thursday for comment.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said Obama and Clinton have both made it clear that the administration opposes the law.

"I will defer to the Justice Department on the legal steps that are available and where they stand on the review of the law," Crowley said. "The secretary believes that comprehensive immigration reform is a better course of action."

Brewer, a Republican, said in a statement that "this is no way to treat the people of Arizona."

"To learn of this lawsuit through an Ecuadorean interview with the secretary of state is just outrageous," she said. "If our own government intends to sue our state to prevent illegal immigration enforcement, the least it can do is inform us before it informs the citizens of another nation."

Brewer spokesman Paul Senseman said the governor was "outraged" and that Clinton's comments make it appear that the Justice Department has decided to file suit.

"But she's confident that in the end, the state of Arizona, the citizens, will prevail," he said.

On April 23, Brewer signed what is considered the toughest legislation in the nation targeting illegal immigrants. It is set to go into effect July 29 pending multiple legal challenges and the Justice Department's review.

The law requires police investigating another incident or crime to ask people about their immigration status if there's a "reasonable suspicion" they're in the country illegally. It also makes being in Arizona illegally a misdemeanor, and it prohibits seeking day-labor work along the state's streets.

The law's stated intention is to drive illegal immigrants out of Arizona and discourage them from coming in the first place. It has outraged civil rights groups, drawn criticism from Obama and led to marches and protests organized by people on both sides of the issue.

The law's backers say Congress isn't doing anything meaningful about illegal immigration, so it's the state's duty to address the issue. Critics say it will lead to racial profiling and discrimination against Hispanics, and damage ties between police and minority communities.

Brewer met with Obama in the Oval Office about the law on June 3, telling him: "We want our border secured." Obama reiterated his objections to the law. Neither side appeared to give ground although both talked about seeking a bipartisan solution.

Other Arizona politicians, political candidates and activist groups were quick to weigh in on Clinton's remarks. U.S. Senate candidate J.D. Hayworth, who is challenging Sen. John McCain, called them appalling; attorney general candidates Tom Horne and Andrew Thomas also denounced them.

Joanne Lin, legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union, urged the administration to take swift action against the law.

Blagojevich Witness Says He Got Job After Donating

BY MIKE ROBINSON AND
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Associated Press Writers

CHICAGO — A former state finance official testified Thursday that he got his job from Rod Blagojevich after contributing \$50,000 to the former Illinois governor's campaign.

Ali Ata, former executive director of the Illinois Finance Authority, testified during Blagojevich's corruption trial that he took a check for \$25,000 to

a meeting with the governor in 2003 and Blagojevich brought up the possibility that Ata might get a job with the state.

Ata said he didn't get his job with the Finance Authority until after donating another \$25,000 to the Blagojevich campaign a year later. He said that after making the donation he ran into Blagojevich at a fundraising event and the governor said he would be getting a job with the state and "it had better be one where you can make some money."

Blagojevich, 53, has pleaded

not guilty to scheming to sell or trade the U.S. Senate seat President Barack Obama gave up following his November 2008 election. He has also pleaded not guilty to plotting to launch a racketeering scheme using the powers of the governor's office.

Ata testified at both trials that the exchange of the \$25,000 campaign check took place in a conference room in Rezko's Chicago office.

She said they managed to get their friends five of the nine seats on the board that governed the

Illinois Finance Authority. That came in handy for Ata when he was nominated for the post of executive director of the authority, which provides public financing to businesses, nonprofit groups and local government agencies throughout the state.

By law, Blagojevich had to nominate two candidates for the job, but Hayden said the other person nominated "was not a serious candidate" and the majority of the board favored Ata.

Chicago attorney Joseph Cari testified that on a 2003 plane ride

to a fundraiser in New York, Blagojevich told him he thought governors have an advantage over senators in seeking the presidency because they could get campaign money out of companies seeking business from the state.

Cari, a former national finance chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said Rezko and Kelly dangled the possibility that he could get law business and other fees from the state if he would put his fundraising contacts to work for a possible Blagojevich run for the White House.

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