

Saperstein: "This bill is an affront to America's history as a land welcoming to immigrants who have sought not only freedom, but the opportunity to contribute to and strengthen our nation."

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WASHINGTON, D.C., April 25, 2010 — In response to the state of Arizona's enactment of the Safe Neighborhoods Act (SB 1070), Rabbi David Saperstein, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, issued the following statement:

We are deeply disappointed by Arizona Governor Jan Brewer's signing into law SB 1070, immigration legislation that encourages racial and ethnic profiling and dangerously extends enforcement of federal immigration law to local police. We share the concern about undocumented immigration, but here the treatment is far worse than the problem.

This inhumane and retrogressive bill virtually invites racial and ethnic profiling by broadly defining reasonable suspicion of undocumented status as grounds for questioning by police officers. Allowing an individual's accent or skin color to precipitate an investigation into his or her legal status is an anathema to American values of justice and our historic status as a nation of immigrants. The bill is also likely to endanger our communities by discouraging immigrants from cooperating with law enforcement on issues of national security.

Over the centuries, Jews have so often known the experience of being "strangers in strange lands." The plight of the non-citizen resonates for us. This bill is an affront to America's history as a land welcoming to immigrants who have sought not only freedom, but the opportunity to contribute to and strengthen our nation.

We agree wholeheartedly that our immigration system is broken and in need of significant repair. Yet this bill moves us in the wrong direction, violating the principles of justice on which our nation was founded. We should, instead, focus our energy on comprehensive reform of our immigration system.

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