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## Civil Rights Groups Protest Arizona Immigration Law, File Suit Over Federal Program

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The National Day Laborer Organizing Network, The Center for Constitutional Rights and the Benjamin Cardozo School of Law filed the Freedom of Information Act suit in New York federal court. The groups said they were seeking records about the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency's "Secure Communities" program -- which was set up in 2007 to help local law enforcement and federal

authorities coordinate to identify and deport illegal immigrant criminals in the United States.

The groups say the passage last week of the Arizona bill combined with the expansion of the Secure Communities program, which is already operational in 20 states, is cause for alarm.

"At a time when police and ICE partnerships have clearly failed, ICE is moving swiftly to implement the Secure Communities program in every jail by 2013," said Center for Constitutional Rights lawyer Sunia Patel.

Meanwhile, the groups decried the Arizona law, which has generated widespread criticism despite being supported by a majority of Arizona lawmakers and Arizona residents, according to a recent poll. The law makes illegal immigration a state crime and allows local law enforcement to question people about their immigration status and arrest them if they can't provide proper documentation.

"This is the most racist bill that we've seen in a generation," said Chris Newman, general counsel for the National Day Laborer Organizing Network. "The Obama administration is moving with speed, deceptiveness and deception."

President Obama, though, has criticized the Arizona law as "misguided." Attorney General Eric Holder said Tuesday that the Department of Justice may challenge it in court.

Representatives from the civil rights groups were meeting with Obama administration officials at the White House Tuesday afternoon. About 50 activists protested in Washington, D.C.

ACLU spokesman Johnny Barnes warned that the "web" of alleged deception over immigration policy won't end in Arizona. "It only started there," he said.

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