

Liberal California is trying to redefine citizenship. It's not helping immigrants

By Andrea Seastrand

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In California, a competition has emerged among liberal politicians to determine who can enact the most extreme laws on immigration and how the state can unilaterally redefine what citizenship is. Of course the irony is that these efforts are motivated solely to further a political agenda that could end up with substantial collateral damage that hurts undocumented immigrants.

The most brazen example of this flawed mentality was the passage of Senate Bill 54 last year, which made California a sanctuary state. This law limits what state and local law enforcement can share with federal immigration authorities for people in the country illegally who have previously committed crimes.

Senate Bill 54 has already [led to more raids directly on the streets of communities](#) instead of detaining undocumented immigrants with criminal records in county jails due to the complex restrictions on what law enforcement are able to share with the federal government. This increases the danger for both federal immigration authorities and communities alike, yet this doesn't matter to proponents looking to score political points by passing this law. Local governments across California are rightfully upset about this attempt to shield people who have committed crimes while in the country illegally which is why numerous [cities and counties](#) have joined the federal government's lawsuit challenging Senate Bill 54.

The false sense of security provided by the so called sanctuary state law is emblematic of how grandstanding by progressive lawmakers produces little real-world benefit and hurts the communities that they are purporting to be helping. We see another example of this in San Francisco, where its Board of Supervisors placed a measure on the ballot that was approved by voters in 2016 that allows undocumented immigrants to vote in school board elections. However, city officials [have now issued warnings](#) that voters'

information could be shared with federal authorities and could have implications for future attempts to obtain legal status.

This sets up a difficult decision and risk of deportation for anyone looking to vote under this law. The perils of taking these actions also reinforces the reality that the state is not capable of extending citizenship rights in place of the federal government.

But legal reality does not mean that numerous other attempts are already under way. [Senate Bill 174 was recently introduced](#) in the state Legislature and would change California's definition of a citizen to allow undocumented immigrants the right to serve on state and local boards and commissions. This comes after the [state Senate appointed an undocumented immigrant](#) to the California Student Opportunity and Access Program Project Grant Advisory Committee earlier this year — putting the appointee at risk for increased scrutiny and a potential target for immigration officials.

In any other country, the notion of a non-citizen serving in a governmental position of great importance would be absurd, but that type of logic has no place in California's progressive dream of a borderless society where there are no rules on who can come into the country. It is clearly an attempt to chip away at the line between citizen and non-citizen.

This election saw [non-citizens serving as election day poll workers](#) due to a 2013 law passed by California Democrats. While at least these individuals have legal residency rights, it still presents a significant policy shift because people who cannot vote are tasked with an important role in our elections process. Given the current sentiments in Sacramento, there will certainly be a future attempt to allow undocumented immigrants to work at polling sites.

What all of this shows is the unending attempt for California to score political points for left-wing voters by attempting to make its own immigration policy and redefine citizenship. These efforts represent an agenda that is completely out of touch with everyday Californians and undermine the possibility of immigration reform at the federal level.

Most would agree there should be sympathy for people coming to the United States to seek a better life, but it must be in rational process to ensure fairness for all those looking to immigrate here.

Until lawmakers in Sacramento acknowledge this, it leaves California to deal with the untenable position that led to foolish laws like Sanctuary State that are actually making things more unstable in communities with large numbers of undocumented immigrants. No wonder there is little choice for local governments to resist. The sooner California abandons its piecemeal approach to immigration policy, the better off its citizens and non-citizens will be.

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