

Texas city votes on illegals rental ban

May 13, 2007 Washington Times

FARMERS BRANCH, Texas (AP) -- Voters were to decide yesterday whether to repeal or approve a ban on landlords renting apartments to most illegal aliens in their Dallas suburb.

The ban was being approved by a 3-to-1 margin as early votes were counted.

Since the City Council approved the ordinance in November, Farmers Branch has become the site of protests and angry confrontations.

"The thing that strikes me most about it, is just the level of emotion, the level of frustration regarding the whole immigration issue," said Cal Jillson, a political science professor at Southern Methodist University.

More than 90 local governments across the nation have proposed similar measures, but Farmers Branch is the first to put the issue to a public vote.

The regulation facing voters yesterday requires apartment managers to verify that renters are U.S. citizens or legal immigrants before leasing to them. Minors and people 62 and older are exempt from having to prove their immigration status or citizenship. Families that include both citizens and illegal aliens could lease if they meet certain conditions.

Even if voters approved the ban, opponents planned to seek a restraining order to stop the city from enforcing it and try to get the case to trial.

Council members accepted comment from the public only after their vote in November, saying the federal government has failed to address the immigration issue. Councilman Tim O'Hare, the ordinance's lead proponent, contends the city's economy and quality of life will improve if illegal aliens are kept out.

The council revised the ordinance in January to include the exemptions for minors, seniors and some mixed-status families.

However, opponents of the regulation gathered enough signatures to force the city to put the measure on the municipal election ballot.

The city already was facing four lawsuits brought by civil rights groups, residents, property owners and businesses who contend the ordinance discriminates and that it places landlords in the precarious position of acting as federal immigration officers. Their attorneys say the ordinance attempts to regulate immigration, a duty that is exclusively the federal government's. One lawsuit also claims the council violated the state open-meetings act when deciding on the ordinance.

Local proposals aimed at regulating illegal entry often fail to pass constitutional muster, said Muzaffar Chishti, director of the Migration Policy Institute office at New York University School of Law.

"There is significant frustration, so that's what's driving it," Mr. Chishti said. "But the simple fact is they cannot do too much other than impress upon the Congress the need for immigration reform."

Residents turn out in force to approve city's rental ban

BY PATRICK MCGEE May. 13, 2007

STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

FARMERS BRANCH -- Voters in this Dallas suburb overwhelmingly approved a referendum that prohibits landlords from renting to illegal immigrants, setting the stage for continued lawsuits and national attention over the immigration issue.

The referendum passed with about 68 percent of the vote, according to unofficial results. Pro-rental-ban City Council candidates David Koch and Tim Scott also won easily.

The city reported that 5,999 voters went to the polls, a record for city elections.

Councilman Tim O'Hare, who has led the city's anti-illegal-immigration efforts, said Farmers Branch will move forward with implementing the ordinance, scheduled to take effect May 22.

"I thought it would pass by a wide margin," he said. "It's the right thing to do, and most people support upholding the law."

Ban opponent Elizabeth Villafranca said she's confident that her side will prevail in court.

"This is the beginning of the end for Ordinance 2903," she said.

"It will never see the light of day."

Months in the making

Residents, activists and political action committees worked feverishly on the issue for months trying to get their supporters to the polls. Nearly \$90,000 was raised in campaign contributions.

Justice Department officials had promised to monitor the voting. But few confrontations were reported during the election, which was covered by the national media.

Supporters of the referendum say illegal immigration has placed too much of a burden on local services, such as schools. They say that the law needs to be enforced and that the federal government isn't doing that.

Opponents say that immigration is a matter for the federal government and that Farmers Branch's stance is alienating Hispanics. They also say that landlords shouldn't be responsible for verifying citizenship.

Ana Reyes, a longtime Farmers Branch resident, was among the opponents trying to get voters to the polls Saturday afternoon. When one man told her that his daughter had left for work, she urged him to call her and ask her to vote.

"I can't tell you how urgent this is to our community," Reyes said.

At one of the city's seven polling places, City Council member Ben Robinson predicted victory an hour before the polls closed.

He said he had seen a few signs of animosity but nothing as dramatic as the shouting matches at some council meetings.

Rick Johnson, another ban supporter, pointed across the street to where he said a campaign sign had been stolen.

"We had a lot of signs come up missing. We were prepared for that," he said.

An important debate

Bill Brewer, an attorney who opposed the referendum, said the question created an important debate.

He noted that no other North Texas community has followed Farmers Branch's lead and that he'll press forward with his lawsuits against the rental ban.

But O'Hare said during a celebration at a hotel that he believes the city will prevail in court.

Aztlan News Network

Farmers Branch TX, OK's Racist Anti-Migrant Law

PDF PRINT EMAIL

Written by Daniel Maldonado

Saturday, 12 May 2007

The racist electorate of Farmers Branch, Texas has approved by a 68% – 32% (preliminary results) vote, an ordinance that would fine landlords and property managers \$500.00 for renting to the undocumented.

Councilman Tim O'Hare, the measure's main advocate, contends that the city's economy and quality of life will improve if undocumented residents are prohibited from settling in Farmers Branch. The measure's approval arrives in the shadow of an article published last week on the MSNBC.com website that shows a number of cities having difficulty raising the funds needed to defend such racist ordinances in court. The Farmers Branch ordinance was one of the cities named in the article.

Farmers Branch currently faces 4 lawsuits and it is likely more will be filed now that the measure has passed. Lawsuits questioning the constitutionality of immigration laws passed at the local level have so far been able to stave off the implementation of these laws. The constitution grants the federal government sole control of immigration to the country.

Nevertheless, hate filled measures such as the Farmers Branch ordinance have been voted on by 90 cities throughout the U.S.

Farmers Branch has produced some of the most heated debates and protests.

Opponents of the measure contend that it turns landlords and managers into immigration agents.

The measure was originally approved by the city council in November '07, but watered down in January of this year.

Texas town eyes ban on renting to illegals

By Associated Press | May 13, 2007

FARMERS BRANCH, Texas -- Voters were deciding yesterday whether to repeal or approve a ban on landlords renting apartments to most illegal immigrants in their Dallas suburb. Since the City Council approved the ordinance in November, Farmers Branch has become the site of protests and angry confrontations.

"The thing that strikes me most about it is just the level of emotion, the level of frustration regarding the whole immigration issue," said Cal Jillson, a political science professor at Southern Methodist University.

More than 90 local governments around the nation have proposed similar measures, but Farmers Branch is the first to put the issue to a public vote. Polls were scheduled to close at 8 p.m.

The regulation that faced voters yesterday requires apartment managers to verify that renters are US citizens or legal immigrants before leasing to them. Minors and people 62 and over are exempt from having to prove their immigration status or citizenship. Families that include both citizens and illegal immigrants could lease if they meet certain conditions.

Even if voters approve the ban, opponents planned to seek a restraining order to stop the city from enforcing it and try to get the case to trial.

Council members accepted comment from the public only after their vote in November, saying the federal government has failed to address illegal immigration. Councilman Tim O'Hare, the ordinance's lead proponent, contends the city's economy and quality of life will improve if illegal immigrants are kept out.

The council revised the ordinance in January to include the exemptions for minors, seniors, and some mixed-status families.

However, opponents of the regulation gathered enough signatures to force the city to put the measure on the municipal election ballot.

The city was already facing four lawsuits brought by civil rights groups, residents, property owners, and businesses, contending that the ordinance discriminates and that it places landlords in the precarious position of acting as federal immigration officers.

The suits say the ordinance attempts to regulate immigration, a duty that is exclusively the federal government's. One lawsuit also alleges the council violated the state open meetings act when deciding on the ordinance.

Anti-Illegal-Immigrant Law OK'd in Texas

Sunday May 13, 2007 7:31 AM

AP Photo NYOL580

By ANABELLE GARAY

Associated Press Writer

FARMERS BRANCH, Texas (AP) - Voters in this Dallas suburb became the first in the nation Saturday to prohibit landlords from renting to most illegal immigrants.

The ban was approved by a vote of 68 percent to 32 percent in final, unofficial returns.

The balloting marked the first public vote on a local government measure to crack down on illegal immigration.

``It says especially to Congress that we're tired of the out-of-control illegal immigration problem. That if Congress doesn't do something about it, cities will," said Tim O'Hare, a City Council member who was the ordinance's lead proponent.

The ordinance requires apartment managers to verify that renters are U.S. citizens or legal immigrants before leasing to them, with some exceptions.

Property managers or owners who break the rule face a misdemeanor charge punishable by a fine of up to \$500.

Council members approved the ordinance in November, then revised it in January to include exemptions for minors, seniors and some families with a mix of legal residents and illegal immigrants.

Farmers Branch has become the site of protests and angry confrontations, and opponents of the regulation gathered enough signatures to force the city to put the measure on the municipal election ballot.

With Saturday's approval of the ban, opponents plan to fight it in court, and will seek a restraining order to stop the city from enforcing it.

The city was already facing four lawsuits brought by civil rights groups, residents, property owners and businesses who contend the ordinance discriminates and that it places landlords in the precarious position of acting as federal immigration officers. Their attorneys say the ordinance attempts to regulate immigration, a duty that is exclusively the federal government's. One lawsuit also alleges the council violated the state open meetings act when deciding on the ordinance.

O'Hare contends the city's economy and quality of life will improve if illegal immigrants are kept out.

Around the country, more than 90 local governments have proposed, passed or rejected laws prohibiting landlords from leasing to illegal immigrants, penalizing businesses that employ them or training police to enforce immigration laws.

Local proposals aimed at regulating illegal immigration often fail to pass constitutional muster, said Muzaffar Chishti, director of the Migration Policy Institute office at New York University School of Law.

``There is significant frustration, so that's what's driving it," Chishti said. ``But the simple fact is they cannot do too much other than impress upon the Congress the need for immigration reform."

