

Hobbsans protest Pearce vote on immigrant bills

DENISE MARQUEZ NEWS-SUN



SUBMITTED PHOTO Around 100 Hobbs residents participated in a protest Tuesday against Congressman Steve Pearce, R-N.M., for voting in favor of two proposals involving immigrant laws. At around 6 p.m. the protesters marched down Turner Street from the JC Penny store to the Hobbs Republican Party Headquarters, located at 1776 N. Turner.

Around 100 Hobbs residents participated in a protest Tuesday against Congressman Steve Pearce, R-N.M., for voting in favor of two proposals involving immigrant laws.

Pearce voted to pass H.R. 3003, the No Sanctuary for Criminals Act, and H.R. 3004, Kate's Law, on June 29, which both bills were passed by the House of Representatives. H.R. 3003 may prevent sanctuary cities from existing by withholding certain federal grants from cities that refuse to comply with the nation's immigration laws. H.R. 3004 will increase penalties for individuals who come back to the U.S. after being convicted of a felony and deported. The protest was organized by Somos Lea County, the local chapter of Somos Un Pueblo Unido, a statewide immigrant right's activist group. The protest took place in front of Hobbs Republican Party Headquarters, 1776 N. Turner.

Marina Piña, a community organizer for Somos Un Pueblo Unido Lea County, said the bills are anti-immigrant laws and Pearce needs to know that he does not have the full support of Lea County's community.

"He's the only one from the New Mexico congressional delegation who voted for two very anti-immigrant bills," Piña said. "When the members were organizing this protest they said, 'People need to know that Congressman Pearce did not support his own community on this and we need to express what we have to say, because we don't think it's right.'"

Ben Ray Lujan, D-N.M., and Michelle Lujan Grisham, D-N.M., both voted against the two bills in June.

At around 6 p.m. Tuesday, the protesters marched down Turner Street from the JC Penny store to the Hobbs Republican Party Headquarters. They held signs

that read, “No Mas Odio! No More Hate Love More Hate Less,” and “Paren de Deportar Trabajadores (Stop deporting workers),” and “Immigrants Make Lea County Better.”

“The immigrant community from Hobbs feels very much a part of this community,” Piña said. “We feel threatened and we feel not welcomed, despite the fact that we’re working so hard and contributing to the local economy. Congressman Pearce continues to have this very anti-immigrant rhetoric when it comes to voting. You (Pearce) may not vote with us but here we are. We’re watching and we want to keep you accountable to your vote.”

Congressman Pearce was not available for a comment by press time Wednesday, but in a new release published in June he stated he supported updating an outdated immigration system and that is why he supports H.R. 3003.

“We in New Mexico know first-hand the challenges that come with a broken and outdated immigration system,” Pearce stated. “However, failures and flaws intertwined in our system are no excuse for cities to willfully ignore the laws of this nation. All levels of government should be responsible to follow and enforce the laws of our nation. It is the responsibility of Congress to work with the Administration to do all we can to secure our border, reform immigration policies to ensure easy, fair, and timely visas can be obtained, and provide respect and certainty to every individual living in our nation.”

As for H.R. 3004, Pearce said after Kate Steinle was murdered on July 1, 2015 on a San Francisco pier by an individual who had seven prior felony convictions and was deported on five separate occasions, he supports Kate’s law to help make communities more safe. “Congress must do all it can to keep our communities safe,” Pearce stated. “Kate’s Law does this by increasing the penalties associated with repeated illegal entry into the United States. This act, along with the No Sanctuary for Criminals Act, cannot occur in a vacuum without congress taking necessary steps forward to address the larger issue at hand — our nation’s vulnerable immigration system. More must be done to create a visa program that provides individuals and families around the world looking for a better life with safer, faster and a more just system.” Piña said these two bills may have a negative impact on the local economy by deporting people who are integral members of Lea County’s workforce.

“He decided to side with Trump’s administration on this,” Piña said. “It might be the immigrant community protesting and being directly impacted but when a part of our community is being vulnerable and is being persecuted and attacked it’s not good for anybody. Immigrant families work in the two main industries of southeastern New Mexico, which is oil and gas and the dairy industry. So how devastating would it be for the local economy when you have all these people either leaving or getting deported because of this rhetoric and these very anti-immigrant proposals.”

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