

Appeals court rules in favor of Sheriff Arpaio in workplace raids controversy

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PHOENIX - Sheriff Joe Arpaio's workplace immigration raids may be coming back after an appeals court ruled Monday that they are constitutional.

Initially, a lower court agreed with the plaintiffs, Puente Arizona, that Arizona's identity theft laws are unconstitutional and are preempted by federal immigration laws.

"This was a big blow because I thought we were finally heading some place," said Lydia Guzman, who didn't know that place would be back to court.

"This ruling is just a temporary victory-- if that's what they call it," she said.

Guzman worked alongside Puente Arizona when the workplace raids took place. From 2008 to 2014, the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office conducted more than 80 raids at businesses and made more than 700 arrests.

"I saw a lot of crying ladies, a lot of crying children because they're parents were being taken away or because their spouses were being taken away," Guzman said.

In a statement, the self-proclaimed "Toughest Sheriff in America" says the court agrees that identification theft laws are neutral and apply to everyone, "unauthorized aliens, authorized aliens and U.S. Citizens alike."

MCSO Chief Deputy Jack Macintyre said it isn't a crime to enforce the law.

"It is an issue that needed to be addressed for the entire community. We were kind of surprised that this group Puente [Arizona] tried to paint it as if they were the only ones being targeted. That certainly wasn't the case," Macintyre said.

Even though it's a setback for their cause, Puente Arizona Director Carlos Garcia said they still won a small battle.

"We brought this lawsuit forward, and for the last year-and-a-half we've been able to keep Maricopa County raid-free," Garcia said.

With so many court cases surrounding Arpaio, ABC15 is asking: Could this affect the outcome of his contempt of court hearings?

Local attorney James Goodnow said that's not likely.

"Unless one of the lawyers in the contempt case brings this up, probably you're going to see they're disconnected completely," Goodnow said.

Puente Arizona has 21 days to appeal the ruling, and they say that's exactly what they plan to do.

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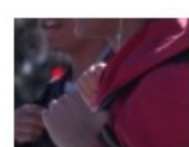


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