

In Port Jefferson, rallies over Arizona law

July 31, 2010 by PATRICK WHITTLE / patrick.whittle@newsday.com



About 50 mostly [Long Island](#) residents from a patchwork of social justice and immigrants' rights groups gathered outside Port Jefferson's Village Hall Saturday to protest Arizona's controversial immigration law.

Across the street, around a dozen demonstrators voiced support for the law, which requires law enforcement officers to check a person's immigration status

while enforcing other laws.

Echoing many recent protests around the country, participants in the larger demonstration derided the law, parts of which took effect Thursday, as "unconstitutional" and "racist."

Several present said Saturday's rally needed to be held in [Suffolk County](#) because of recent racially motivated crimes in the county. Some cited the 2008 murder of Salvadorean immigrant [Marcelo Lucero](#) in [Patchogue](#).

Charlene Obernauer of [Stony Brook](#), director of [Long Island Jobs With Justice](#), charged that the county has "historically been hostile to immigrant rights."

Luis Valenzuela, executive director of the [Long Island Immigrant Alliance](#), told the crowd the Arizona law was "a destructive, divisive and un-American law."

Demonstrators from Long Island Wins and Long Island Council of Churches also attended the rally.

Counter-protester Maureen Dowling of Port Jefferson, who waved an American flag from across the street, said she supports Arizona's legislation because she believes it will protect the country's border from drug traffickers and terrorists. "I am not for illegal aliens, and I'm not going to call them some fancy P.C. name," she said.

Police said the midday demonstrations were orderly and peaceful.

On Wednesday, federal Judge [Susan Bolton](#) in Arizona temporarily blocked controversial sections of the law, including provisions that require legal immigrants to carry registration papers.

[< back to article](#)