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Border Patrol Policy Change Important Victory for Border Communities

Northwest Immigrant Rights Project praises clients who stepped up to make complaint

Seattle, WA – In an important victory for border communities, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) called the decision by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), made public today, to immediately halt the practice of using Border Patrol agents as interpreters for state and local law enforcement agencies a step in the right direction. This policy change helps safeguard the rights and safety of immigrant communities residing in border regions throughout the country.

Earlier this year, NWIRP and two cooperating attorneys filed a civil rights complaint on behalf of six Washington residents. The complaint was a critical part of the advocacy effort that prompted this policy change.

“We commend the Department of Homeland Security for stopping the practice of Border Patrol agents providing interpretation assistance in routine local law enforcement matters,” said Jorge L. Barón, NWIRP’s Executive Director. “We are grateful for the courage of the clients who spoke up against this discriminatory practice and who have helped bring about a change of policy that will affect communities throughout the country. We also applaud the work of numerous partners at the local and national level who advocated for an end to this practice.”

The complaint, addressed to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the U.S. Department of Justice, asserted that the practice of Border Patrol agents providing interpretation assistance to local law enforcement agencies violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other protections. The complaint requested that, among other steps, DHS issue policy guidance to curtail this practice.

The original civil rights complaint can be found [here](#). The complaint was filed on behalf of six individuals who had been detained and placed in removal proceedings by Border Patrol agents. The agents ostensibly had been called to the scene to provide

interpretation for other law enforcement agencies. The complaint to DHS and DOJ was filed after the USDA'S Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, known as OASCR, issued a decision on a related complaint filed earlier by NWIRP. On April 28, 2012, OASCR issued a [decision](#) finding that the U.S. Forest Service violated individuals' civil rights by calling the Border Patrol to ostensibly provide translation assistance and law enforcement support.

The New York Times was among the many news organizations that reported on incidents in the Olympic Peninsula. Click [here](#) for the New York Times story.

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Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) is the only nonprofit organization providing comprehensive immigration legal services to low-income individuals and families in Washington State. Learn more at www.nwirp.org See our media releases [here](#).