

PEOPLE'S WORLD



Marilyn Bechtel/PW

California elected officials are welcoming U.S. District Court Judge William H. Orrick's April 25 ruling that blocks President Trump's executive order to withhold federal funds from sanctuary cities and counties.

Last week, Attorney General Jeff Sessions followed up with a letter to nine jurisdictions around the country, including California, demanding they prove they are communicating with federal immigration officials about the status of people with whom they come in contact.

San Francisco and Santa Clara County had sought a preliminary injunction against the executive order, claiming the president overstepped his authority by threatening to withhold billions in funding. San Francisco said it would lose over \$1 billion in federal funding, and Santa Clara County put the toll at \$1.7 billion, or over one-third of its revenue.

The judge responded to Trump administration claims that the funds cut off would actually be far more limited, by pointing out that the order's wording, as well as subsequent comments by the president and by Sessions, addressed "all federal funding."

San Francisco was the first to sue to halt the order, followed by Santa Clara County. But Judge Orrick's ruling applies across the country. Other suits have been initiated by Richmond, Calif., across the bay from San Francisco, and by Seattle and two Massachusetts cities.

San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee applauded the ruling, declaring the city "is and will remain a sanctuary city. We know that sanctuary cities are safer, healthier and more productive places to live." At the same time, he said, San Francisco's sanctuary laws "are in compliance with federal law," because the city will continue to honor warrants against serious criminals.

City Attorney Dennis Herrera said, "This is why we have courts – to halt the overreach of a president and an attorney general who either don't understand the Constitution or chose to ignore it."

And Dave Cortese, president of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, declared that "the politics of fear has just suffered a major setback, thanks to Judge Orrick and our judicial branch, along with the support of cities and counties across the country."

Speaking on public radio station KQED's Forum program April 26, Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia called the decision "a victory for those of us at local government in cities and counties to pursue the practices we believe are the most effective in keeping our communities safe and making them stronger. Frankly, also, a victory for policies that bring us together, not divide us."

Speaking as part of a panel discussion, Gioia said "limited cooperation" between local officials and ICE is important to build trust across communities so immigrants can feel comfortable with accessing services. He said that is very important for public health, "which benefits everyone."

"An example: we are already getting stories of hardworking immigrant families canceling appointments for mental health and health care services out of fear, anxiety, mistrust. We want those folks coming in for services," Gioia said. "That's why we want to look at some kind of sanctuary policy with law enforcement ... Everybody in this county is healthier when more people get preventative health services."

Gioia said county health care services have recently been made available to undocumented adults, and emphasized the need to “change the relationship between the sheriff’s department and immigrant communities.”

He also called “false premises” the claims that crime is rampant in immigrant communities, and that sanctuary policies bar any cooperation between local law enforcement and ICE.

Reaction to the ruling around the state was equally positive, with Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti saying the ruling “reminds us that people’s rights transcend political stunts,” and state Attorney General Xavier Becerra calling it “consistent with the rule of law. In California, we will always fight to protect our people.”

“President Trump has tripped over the Constitution again,” State Senate President Pro Tem Kevin De León said in a statement. “The state of California, along with our cities and counties like San Francisco and Santa Clara that value the contributions of their immigrant communities, will continue to protect all of our honest, hardworking residents against the cynical and destructive policies of this administration.”