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Florida attorney general digs in against judge blocking new state immigration law

Uthmeier said he won't tell law enforcement agencies to obey federal court order halting immigration arrests



Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier speaks during a press conference April 14, 2025. Uthmeier said he will not tell state law enforcement agencies to obey a federal court order halting immigration arrests (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel/TNS)

By [ANA CEBALLOS](#) | Miami Herald

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TALLAHASSEE — Attorney General James Uthmeier says he will not tell state law enforcement agencies to obey a federal court order halting immigration arrests under a new state law even as the judge who issued the order threatens to hold him in contempt of court.

In a statement issued to Fox News on Friday, Uthmeier said that he disagrees with a federal court ruling prohibiting all state law enforcement officials and police agencies from [arresting immigrants](#) who enter the U.S. illegally and then come into the state of Florida. He also said he does not believe an attorney general should be held in contempt of court for what he says is “respecting the rule of law.”

“We believe the court has overstepped and lacks jurisdiction here, and I will not tell law enforcement to stop fulfilling their constitutional duties,” Uthmeier told Fox News.

Uthmeier, who in February was appointed to the state’s top law enforcement position by Gov. Ron DeSantis, said he will not put his “stamp of approval” on a federal court order he says should not apply to law enforcement agencies because they are not parties to the lawsuit.

His remarks are arguably the most defiant yet in a court case that has already featured a lot of drama. On Tuesday, U.S. District [Judge Kathleen Williams](#), of Miami, scheduled a critical hearing for late May that could lead to Uthmeier being held in contempt of court for flouting her orders in the immigration case.

At the Tuesday hearing, Williams said she was “offended” to hear the attorney general’s position that he does not believe her judicial order is legitimate. Her remarks came after she previously had scolded lawyers for Uthmeier’s office after learning that Florida Highway Patrol officers had arrested more than a dozen people — including a U.S. citizen — despite her ordering them to stop on April 4 when she issued a 14-day temporary restraining order that blocked enforcement on the state’s immigration law.

The judge told lawyers for the attorney general on Tuesday to consult with Uthmeier about withdrawing his advice to police officers to ignore her order, but they said Uthmeier was not retreating from his position.

“What I am offended by is someone suggesting you don’t have to follow my order, that it’s not legitimate,” Williams said.

The showdown between the federal judge and the state attorney general’s office is tied to a lawsuit filed by immigrant groups and their lawyers against Uthmeier and state prosecutors across Florida. The lawsuit says the new state law, which makes it a misdemeanor for immigrants who enter the U.S. illegally and then come into the state of Florida, is unconstitutional because only federal authorities have the power to enforce immigration laws.

Since the lawsuit was filed, Williams has issued two temporary restraining orders that banned state authorities from enforcing the law, and said that the state laws are likely unconstitutional. She also issued a preliminary injunction at Tuesday’s hearing prohibiting all state and local law enforcement agencies from making arrests under the new state law.

Her rulings have drawn the attention of top Florida Republicans, including the governor, who has called the federal judge an “activist.” Republican Party of Florida Chairman Evan Power said the judge was “out of control” for trying to hold Uthmeier in contempt of court.

“People don’t want judges getting in the way of enforcing our laws or protecting Floridians from criminal illegals,” Power said in a post on X earlier this week.

The fact that Williams was appointed as a federal judge by President Barack Obama has also been used by Uthmeier’s office to defend his position.

Jeremy Redfern, a spokesman for Uthmeier, characterized the federal judge’s position as “lawfare” by an “Obama-appointed judge.”

Miami Herald staff writer Jay Weaver contributed to this report.

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