

Lawsuit filed over rollback of child immigrant protections

Oregon joined the challenge

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE
Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Nineteen states and the District of Columbia sued on Monday over the Trump administration’s effort to alter a federal agreement that limits how long immigrant children can be kept in detention.

“We wish to protect children from irreparable harm,” California Attorney General Xavier Becerra said as he announced the lawsuit he is co-leading with Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey. Both are Democrats.

Oregon and Washington are among the states involved.

A 1997 agreement known as the Flores settlement says immigrant children must be kept in the least restrictive setting and generally shouldn’t spend more than 20 days in detention.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said last week it would create new regulations on how migrant children are treated. The administration wants to remove court oversight and allow families in detention longer than 20 days. About 475,000 families have crossed the border so far this budget year, nearly three times the previous full-year record for families.

A judge must OK the Trump administration’s proposed changes in order to end the agreement, and a legal battle is expected from the case’s original lawyers.

It’s not likely that U.S. District Court Judge Dolly Gee would approve the changes; it was her ruling in



Ted S. Warren/AP Photo

Washington Attorney General Bob Ferguson talks to reporters on Monday during a news conference in Seattle. Nineteen states, including Washington and Oregon, are suing over the Trump administration’s effort to alter a federal agreement that limits how long immigrant children can be kept in detention.

2015 that extended the application of the Flores agreement to include children who came with families. She ordered the Obama administration to release children as quickly as possible.

Still, Becerra argued California has a role to play in the case because the state is home to so many immigrants.

“The federal government doesn’t have a right to tell us how we provide for the well-being of people in our state,” he said.

California does not have any detention centers that house migrant families. The Trump administration argued that because no states license federal detention centers, they wanted to create their own set of standards in order to satisfy the judge’s requirements that

the facilities are licensed.

They said they will be audited, and the audits made public. But the Flores attorneys are concerned that they will no longer be able to inspect the facilities, and that careful state licensing requirements will be eschewed.

Becerra echoed that argument, saying that removing state authority over licensing centers could allow the federal government to place centers in California or other states that don’t meet basic standards of care.

Attorney General Bob Ferguson of Washington, also a Democrat, said prolonged detention will have long-term impacts on the mental and physical health of immigrant children and families.

“When we welcome

those children into our communities, state-run programs and services bear the burden of the long-term impact of the trauma those children endured in detention,” he said.

California on Monday also sought to halt a Trump administration effort that could deny green cards to immigrants using public benefits.

Other states joining the lawsuit are Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Virginia.

Associated Press journalists Colleen Long in Washington, D.C., and Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington, contributed to this report.

G-7 nations pledge \$40 million to fight Amazon fires

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO and CHRISTOPHER TORCHIA
Associated Press

PORTO VELHO, Brazil — The Group of Seven nations on Monday pledged tens of millions of dollars to help fight raging wildfires in the Amazon and protect its rainforest, even as Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro accused rich countries of treating the region like a “colony.”

The international pledges at a G-7 summit in France included \$20 million from the group, as well as a separate \$12 million from Britain and \$11 million from Canada. Ottawa has also offered to send firefighting planes to Brazil.

Other groups are contributing support for a region whose rainforests are a major absorber of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Earth Alliance, a new environmental foundation backed by Leonardo DiCaprio, is pledging \$5 million in aid, saying the Amazon is one of the “best defenses” against climate change.

The funds are widely seen as critical support, but a relatively small amount for dealing with an environmental crisis of such scale threatening what French President Emmanuel Macron called “the lungs of the planet.”

More than \$1 billion, for example, has been

paid into a fund to help the Amazon in the past decade. And major donors Germany and Norway recently cut donations to Brazilian forestry projects, saying Bolsonaro’s administration isn’t committed to curbing deforestation.

It was unclear how exactly the new money would be administered. Bureaucracy can slow and reduce the amount that reaches programs in the field. Brazil’s environment minister, Ricardo Salles, said the aid was welcome and that Brazil should decide how the resources are used.

More global funding and political will in Brazil will be needed once the fires are extinguished, said John Robinson, chief conservation officer at the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Brazil needs “legislation and regulations that set clear limits preventing landowners — especially large ones — from burning the forest and converting it to agriculture and rangeland, backed by incentives and investment in alternatives,” Robinson said.

The international pledges came despite tensions between European countries and the Brazilian president, who suggested the West was angling to exploit Brazil’s natural resources.

“Look, does anyone help anyone ... without something in return? What have they wanted there for so long?” Bolsonaro said.

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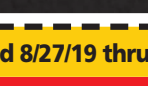
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