

## Civil Rights Groups File Amicus Brief in 8th Circuit to Challenge Arkansas's Discriminatory Land Laws

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A coalition of leading civil rights scholars, legal advocates, and nonprofit organizations [filed an amicus curiae brief](#) on August 12, 2025 with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit in support of a constitutional challenge to Arkansas's alien land laws—Act 636 and Act 174. These laws, which restrict land ownership by so-called “foreign parties” or “foreign-party businesses,” have been criticized for discriminating on the basis of race and national origin and conflicting with federal immigration law.

The amicus brief supports the [lawsuit](#) *Jones Eagle LLC v. Ward* in which the plaintiff challenges the enforcement of Arkansas's alien land laws. The lawsuit was filed against the State of Arkansas and several of its officials involved in implementing these laws. The case arose after the Arkansas Agriculture Secretary's Office referred a U.S. citizen—originally from China—for investigation, alleging that his business violated the new foreign ownership laws. This referral occurred despite the business owner having submitted proof of his U.S. citizenship and documentation of his company's operations.

The plaintiff is represented by [Professor Robert Chang, Director of the Fred T. Korematsu Center for Law and Equality at the University of California, Irvine School of Law](#), and attorneys at [Kutak Rock LLP](#), who argue that the laws are preempted by federal law and violate the Equal Protection Clause due to their discriminatory impact. In December 2024, the District Court issued a [preliminary injunction](#) blocking enforcement of the laws, and the State of Arkansas appealed that decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit.

This [amicus brief](#) was co-authored by [Jeffrey T. Green, Green Lauerman Chartered PLLC](#), [Professor Gabriel “Jack” Chin, University of California, Davis School of Law](#), [Professor Rose Cuison-Villazor, Rutgers Law School](#), [Professor Matthew Erie, American University Washington College of Law](#), and [Professor Pei “Leo” Yu, University of Massachusetts School of Law](#). “There is ample reason to suspect that both laws specifically target individuals of Chinese origin, which makes them discriminatory on the basis of race, national origin, and alienage,” states Prof. Cuison-Villazor. The brief draws on decades of precedent and builds upon similar legal challenges previously raised before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit regarding Florida's alien land law. “These laws are reminiscent of racist alien land laws from the 1920s that have long been limited by the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment,” comments Prof. Chin.

In filing the brief, Mr. Green expressed, “We are honored to represent a diverse coalition of racial justice centers and civil rights organizations across the nation.” The amicus brief is joined by the following civil rights groups:

- [Aoki Center for Critical Race and Nation Studies at the University of California, Davis School of Law](#)

- [Center for Civil Rights and Racial Justice at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law](#)
- [Center for Immigrants Justice \(CIJ\) at Rutgers Law School](#)
- [Center on Race, Inequality, and the Law at New York University, School of Law](#)
- [Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund \(AALDEF\)](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Chicago](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Atlanta](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Southern California](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice \(AAJC\)](#)
- [Asian Law Caucus](#)
- [Chinese American Legal Defense Alliance](#)
- [Chinese for Affirmative Action](#)
- [Committee of 100](#)
- [Conference of Asian Pacific American Law Faculty](#)
- [LatinoJustice PRLDEF](#)
- [National Iranian American Council](#)
- [National Korean American Service & Education Consortium](#)
- [Stop AAPI Hate](#)
- [National Asian Pacific American Bar Association \(NAPABA\)](#)
- [National Filipino American Lawyers Association \(NFALA\)](#)

The authors of the amicus brief enlisted the support of three Rutgers Law School students—Chaewon “Jessica” Park (3L), Kristina Goshorn (3L), and Rui “Asher” Xu (2L)—2025 Summer Law Fellows at the Center for Immigrant Justice (CIJ) at Rutgers Law School. Under the guidance of Professor Cuison-Villazor, Director of CIJ, the students contributed to various stages of the project.

*Jones Eagle LLC v. Ward* represents a broader national conversation around laws that unjustly target immigrant communities based on nationality or origin. The signatories emphasize that Arkansas’s laws—like others before them—revive dangerous patterns of historical exclusion that have no place in today’s world.

For more information, please contact Rose Cuison-Villazor, Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Immigrant Justice, Rutgers Law School, at [rose.villazor@law.rutgers.edu](mailto:rose.villazor@law.rutgers.edu).