

NYIC IMMIGRATION NEWS

An update by The New York Immigration Coalition on issues affecting immigrants and their communities.

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THANKS FOR MAKING CITY ADVOCACY DAY A SUCCESS. NOW . . . JOIN US FOR IMMIGRANTS' DAY IN ALBANY!

Join the NYIC and other immigrant and community groups on Wednesday, April 6th as we travel to Albany to call on Governor Pataki and the State Legislature to address the vital needs and concerns of New York's immigrant and refugee families. We're looking to mobilize at least 600 people to make it loud and clear to Albany officials that immigrant concerns must be a priority. Call Minerva at ext. 238 for more information.

IMMIGRATION

REAL ID Attached to Appropriations Bill; Senate Opposition Will Be Crucial

On March 16th, the House passed a supplemental appropriations bill to fund military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and tsunami relief efforts. As expected, the anti-immigrant REAL ID Act (H.R. 418), which passed the House in early February, was attached to the appropriations bill. The bill now moves to the Senate for possible consideration.

In its current form, the REAL ID Act would, among other things, force states to deny drivers' licenses to undocumented immigrants; raise the burden of proof for asylum seekers; limit immigrants' access to judicial review in federal courts; grant bail bondsmen unprecedented power to arrest and detain immigrants; and give the homeland security secretary the power to waive any federal law that would interfere with building border barriers.

The Senate began a two-week recess on March 18th and will return to session on April 5th. Upon its return, the Senate will either take up the House bill or consider its own appropriations bill. It is critical that REAL ID-type provisions are not included in the Senate bill. Even if the final Senate bill is "clean," however, Senate negotiators will have to deal with REAL ID when they meet with House negotiators in conference committee to resolve differences between the Senate and House versions of the bill.

Please call on Senators Schumer and Clinton to oppose the REAL ID Act and to urge Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), not to allow the supplemental appropriations bill to be used as a vehicle for anti-immigrant legislation (see Action Box). For more information, contact Avidah at ext. 244.

CITY BUDGET

Groups Continue Push for Expansion of ESL and Immigrant Services Funding in City Budget

A recent announcement from the Bloomberg administration that it would fund an Immigrant Family Literacy Program at \$1.8 million was met with a lukewarm response from immigrant community leaders. Leaders noted that the proposal falls far short of what is needed in terms of dollar amount and scope of services to be funded. They continued to urge the mayor and the City Council to each provide \$10 million in the city budget to begin to meet the enormous demand for English classes and immigration and worker legal services in New York City.

The Bloomberg administration announced the program on March 9th, the same day that the NYIC and its members and friends held their annual Immigrant Constituents' Action Day, on which more than 600 immigrant New Yorkers and advocates came together, despite strong winds and cold weather, to call on Mayor Bloomberg and the City Council to address urgent immigrant community concerns.

The literacy program is the first and only immigrant funding initiative proposed by the mayor since he took office. It came in the wake of a landmark report from the Department of City Planning that highlighted the city's record-high foreign-born population of 2.9 million, constituting 38% of the city's population. The report, entitled *The Newest New Yorkers*, documented how immigrants are filling critical labor market needs and how they have become part of almost every neighborhood in the city.

The city's final budget is expected in June. Please call Mayor Bloomberg and Speaker Miller to express your support for more immigrant services funding (see Action Box). For more information, contact Minerva at ext. 238.

STATE BUDGET

State Legislature Struggling to Pass First On-Time Budget in 20 Years; Governor May Veto

The State Legislature is scheduled to pass a budget before April 1st, creating the possibility of the first on-time budget in 20 years. However, the \$106.5 billion budget the legislature is set to adopt was negotiated without Governor Pataki, who has repeatedly stated that it spends too much and will create a \$5 billion deficit for next year. The governor could veto parts of the budget

or challenge the legislature's actions in court. Major components of the legislature's budget, including education, health care, and social services spending, are detailed below.

The legislature is adding an additional \$314 million in state aid for education to the governor's proposed \$500 million increase. New York City is expected to receive about \$300 million in additional aid. It is important to note, however, that the legislature is not addressing the *Campaign for Fiscal Equity* lawsuit, in which the court ordered that New York City receive an additional \$1.4 billion this year. Governor Pataki is appealing the court's decision, and the Assembly, which in the past has held up the budget to secure more funding for education, decided to pass an on-time budget rather than hold out for more funding.

In response to Governor Pataki's proposed cuts in the Medicaid and Family Health Plus programs, the legislature is expected to reject all of the cuts by adding nearly \$700 million to the health care budget. This would preserve facilitated enrollment in the Family Health Plus program and maintain benefits under the program.

In social services, the legislature had reached a tentative agreement that included \$2 million in TANF funds for ESL classes. The agreement, however, fell apart due to court-imposed limits on the legislature's ability to amend the governor's proposals. Negotiations are continuing between the governor and the legislature over how \$1 billion in TANF funds will be spent. For more information, contact Mark at ext. 231.

HEALTH CARE ACCESS

Legislation to Reduce Language Barriers in Hospitals Reintroduced in State Legislature

Legislation has been reintroduced in both chambers of the State Legislature that would set basic standards for hospitals in communicating with limited-English-proficient (LEP) patients. The legislation (A. 4111, S. 2968), introduced by Assemblymember Adriano Espaillat (D-Washington Heights/Inwood) and State Senator Michael Balboni (R-Nassau), would require hospitals in New York State to document the languages spoken by patients; ensure clear communication with LEP patients, for example, by using trained bilingual staff or interpreters; translate important hospital forms into the most common languages; and report on their compliance with the communication requirements.

During the past two legislative sessions, identical legislation passed overwhelmingly in the Assembly but languished in the Senate. To gain traction in the Senate, groups and individuals whose state senators are Republicans need to encourage those officials to co-sponsor S. 2968 (see Action Box). For more information, contact Su Yon at ext. 232 or syi@thenyic.org.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Report Estimates Size and Characteristics of Undocumented Population

The undocumented U.S. population now numbers nearly 11 million people, including more than 6 million Mexicans, according to new estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center. State data show that Arizona and North Carolina now rank among the states with the largest populations of unauthorized migrants. To see the report, visit <http://pewhispanic.org>.

Key Fund: Unlocking the Door for Detained Immigrants

The Key Fund is a new project to give no-interest loans to people imprisoned on immigration charges who cannot afford to pay the bond/bail necessary to win release. Deportation cases can go on for years, and persons who cannot afford bond/bail must choose between years of imprisonment or giving up their fight to remain here with their families. The Key Fund was founded by Families for Freedom, Immigrant Defense Project of NYS Defenders Association, Keeping Hope Alive of the National Lawyers Guild's National Immigration Project, and the Urban Justice Center. Please make your tax-deductible donation to the Urban Justice Center (with "Key Fund" in the memo) and send to Families for Freedom, 2 Washington Street 766N, NY, NY 10004. Please note your address if you would like a receipt.



ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW TO HELP PROTECT IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

- 1. Urge Senators Schumer and Clinton to help defeat the REAL ID Act in the Senate!** New York's senators need to oppose the REAL ID Act and urge Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) and the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), not to allow the supplemental appropriations bill to be used as a vehicle for anti-immigrant legislation. Senator Schumer's district office: 212-486-4430. Senator Clinton's district office: 212-688-6262. Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121.
- 2. Join the fight for expanded ESL and immigrant services funding from New York City!** Call Mayor Bloomberg at 212-788-9600 to tell him that his \$1.8 million immigrant literacy program is not enough and that he should support comprehensive immigrant services at \$10 million. On the City Council side, call Speaker Miller at 212-788-7210 and urge him to ensure the inclusion of \$10 million for the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative in the City Council Response to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget.
- 3. Call and write your Republican state senator to co-sponsor S. 2968 to reduce language barriers in hospitals!** If your state senator is a Republican, please urge him or her to co-sponsor S. 2968. A sample letter that you can modify and send is available at www.thenyic.org. NYS Senate switchboard: 518-455-2800.

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