



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Immigration Should Not Be the Only Issue on Our Agenda

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What You Should Know

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You should know that Paul the Apostle in his letter delivered to the Galatian believers instructed them to: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men especially unto them who are of our household." Galatians 6:10

You should also know that in the few last years, the topic of immigration reform has seemed to become the most important issue for every Hispanic elected official in New York City and State. This has gotten to the point that some have created a litmus test: those who support immigration reform are our friends, and those who

oppose immigration reform are our enemies. This must end.

While I am very proud of the work I have done to promote immigration reform and to protect the rights of immigrants, I need to remind my colleagues in government even though immigration reform is important to fight for and a great part of our agenda, it is not and should not be the only issue.

According to the Apostle Paul, we are responsible for taking good care of everybody - and in doing so, we have to fight to protect the right to decent housing, work opportunities, and social services for our communities. If we don't, who will?

We need to fight for our senior citizens. We need to fight for work opportunities for our work force, and for the right to fair wages so people can maintain their own families. We need to fight to be sure that families don't pay too much in taxes - and also to fight against the use of taxes we pay from being used for things that don't benefit our community. We need to fight so that our children can get the same educational benefits and opportunities that are granted to other communities.

As immigration reform gets more and more attention, too many equally important issues that affect our community are getting overlooked.

I have to ask myself: Where is the outrage of my Hispanic colleagues who support immigration reform while Section 8 continues to downsize, pushing our senior citizens out of their homes? Is the same energy that goes to immigration reform equal to the energy that goes to helping New York's growing homeless population - which includes 23,000 public school students who live in New York City's family shelters? Is there equal concern by my pro-immigration reform colleagues about the low wage growth? Or how about the community centers we need for our youth that are closing? Where are the voices of my colleagues on that issue? It seems to me that too many of our elected officials feel they are safe as long as they pass the litmus test on immigration reform position.

You should know that it's not a good idea to put too much importance on litmus tests. As someone who is dedicated to the pro-life cause and to traditional marriage, I am all too familiar with what it's like, as a Democrat, to fail those litmus tests. I am all too familiar with what it's like to be targeted by those who do not agree with me. All I can say is that litmus tests don't define the whole person.

Many of my fellow Democrats who think of me as someone who failed their litmus test on abortion and on gay marriage don't care at all about the numbers of families in my district who have affordable housing because of my efforts. They completely disregard how hard I fight for our senior citizens and for our schools. They don't seem to care that my district office is open five days a week and that we provide constituent service for 40 - 50 people a day.

Litmus tests can cause a lot of problems for people. If we pass the test, we can become complacent. If we fail the test, we can become a target.

As far as the issue of immigration reform goes for the people who pass the test, they need to be sure that they don't forget about all of the other issues that we need to fight for. And for the people who don't pass the test, we need to realize that even if they don't agree with us, some of them actually work very hard for their communities - and deserve to be respected, not targeted.

This is Senator Rev. Rubén Díaz, and this is what you should know.