



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

## As Democrats Continue To Yield To Lawbreakers, Senate GOP Says We Must Red Light The Green Light Bill

JOHN J. FLANAGAN June 5, 2019

| ISSUE: **ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES, DRIVER'S LICENSES FOR IMMIGRANTS**



The New York State Senate Republican Conference today stood up for the majority of New Yorkers who vehemently oppose the state issuing driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. The Democrat legislation, moving through the Senate and Assembly, would permit illegal immigrants to apply for standard driver's licenses using forms of foreign identification, leaving county clerks and employees at local Departments of Motor Vehicles unable to truly verify authenticity.

The **New York Association of County Clerks** opposes the legislation since they cannot vet documents from other countries. This unfunded mandate would also leave counties to pick up the tab for hiring employees to deal with an influx of applicants as well.

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*“This session, Democrats have yielded to lawbreakers over and over again. We must put the brakes on this unfair proposal which ignores the overwhelming opposition of our citizens to grant this privilege to illegal immigrants. We must Red Light the Green Light bill that simply opens up our system to fraud and places a burden on County Clerks and DMV employees to verify the authenticity of foreign documents as proof of identification,” said Senate Republican Leader John J. Flanagan.*

“Despite legitimate concerns from law enforcement, opposition from county clerks and a Siena College poll that found 61 percent of New Yorkers are opposed to providing driver’s licenses to illegal immigrants, downstate Democrats are continuing to push this idea forward. While social issues are important, we are nearing the end of this year’s legislative session. We should be focusing our energy and attention on more pressing matters such as improving our aging infrastructure, growing jobs, reducing regulations and providing tax relief. Unfortunately, instead of addressing the real issues affecting our state, these downstate Democrats would rather make headlines instead of headway,” said Senator Joseph Griffo.

“The thought of giving a driver’s license, a secure identification document, to someone who is intentionally breaking the law is inconceivable. This measure is bad public policy that would put lives in danger, reward lawbreakers, and send the wrong message to those who take the legal path to citizenship. It’s time we reprioritize in Albany and focus on jobs, lowering taxes, and putting law abiding citizens first,” said Senator James L. Seward.

“I was a member of a New York State Senate Task Force on Immigration and I have studied this issue at great length. I remain steadfast in my position that granting driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants is not good public policy, presents a clear threat to public safety and sends a wrong message to the law-abiding people I represent,” said Senator Ken LaValle.

“I’m proud to have led the fight for public safety in standing strong against the Senate Democrat Majority’s ‘Green Light Bill.’ It’s a fitting name since the Democrats’ bill gives a green light to fraud, danger, and, ultimately, illegal immigrants voting. Their bad bill caters to illegal immigrants, many of whom have been here illegally for years. Anyone who is in this country illegally is breaking the law, and should not be rewarded for doing so! This bill is the ultimate political pander and invites potential abuse by anyone – not just an illegal immigrant – looking to do wrong or to hide prior traffic offenses or a criminal record. Anyone can reinvent themselves multiple times. The Democrats’ bill is a backdoor effort for illegal immigrants to obtain voting privileges – a privilege reserved for American citizens. According to a Siena College Research Institute poll, 61% of New Yorkers, an overwhelming majority, strongly oppose our state handing out driver’s licenses to illegal immigrants. The reality is if enough New Yorkers stand with us, speak up, and speak out against this bad bill, we can stop it. It was done before and we must do it again! Hit the brakes on licenses for illegal immigrants!” said Senator Daphne Jordan.

“The idea that states can defy Federal Law was decided more than a century ago. If New York grants driver’s licenses to illegal immigrants, it will be for the express purpose of undermining federal immigration statutes. New York can’t claim the mantle of leadership by endorsing lawlessness. Valid government identification is reserved for citizens. It ought to remain that way. In their zeal to out progressive one another Senate and Assembly Democrats are willing to do anything, say anything and pass anything. It’s up to us to be the adults in the room and stand up for the rule of law. That’s what we are doing today,” said

Senator Rich Funke.

“This proposal is yet another example of politics trampling common sense. We have a duty and obligation to uphold and consistently enforce our laws. We are a proud nation built by immigrants, like my grandfather and his family, who came here legally in search of a better life. We should not reward those who are breaking the law by living in this country illegally with a New York State driver’s license. If this bill becomes law, it will further disincentivize efforts toward naturalization. If you can be here illegally and can still receive a driver’s license, free college tuition, free legal assistance and free health care, why would you ever want to pursue citizenship?” said Senator Pam Helming.

“Giving driver’s licenses to those here illegally sends the wrong message to honest, law-abiding citizens and those who are trying to do the right thing and have been in line for some time to become American citizens. If there is one set of hoops citizens have to jump through to earn their privileges but no standards for those here illegally, what’s the point of citizenship when you can just sneak into the front of the line and take advantage of our system? Make no mistake, if we continue on this dangerous path, we will become the United States of Non-Citizens,” said Senator Jim Tedisco.

“Instead of worrying about the issues that matter most to New Yorkers such as the state’s extremely high tax burden, atrocious business climate, record level outmigration, and lack of affordability, Democrats are focused on rewarding illegal aliens for breaking our nation’s laws. New Yorkers recognize that driver’s licenses are a privilege afforded to U.S. citizens. That’s why over 60 percent of New Yorkers are against driver’s licenses for illegals, with law enforcement and local officials strongly and vocally in opposition. However, Democrats are once again legalizing criminality in our state and disregarding federal laws they don’t agree with. Instead of listening to the wishes of taxpayers and county officials, Democrats prefer to grab newspaper headlines and pander to their extremist regressive base, even if that

means putting New Yorkers in danger and making law enforcement's job harder," said Senator Robert Ort.

"The Democratic proposal to give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants, if passed, would become the most radical of its kind in the country. This is another example of prioritizing those who break the law over New Yorkers and puts the safety of our citizens and communities at risk," said Senator Mike Ranzenhofer.

"Governor Cuomo and the Democratic leaders of the Legislature are making New York State a haven for lawbreakers. It is a radical, irresponsible, and reckless agenda. I warned before this new legislative session even started that this state would be getting turned upside down at breakneck speed. Following outrageous parole releases and other questionable actions in the name of 'criminal justice,' the next step is to reward lawbreaking illegal immigrants with a government-issued driver's license. It puts overall public safety and security at risk, imposes another unfunded mandates on counties, and asks local, law-abiding public servants to break the law," said Senator Tom O'Mara.

"The issue is very simple, the rule of law matters. If someone is in our country illegally, they are breaking the law. They should not be rewarded with driver's licenses, free college tuition, and free healthcare, especially on the backs of hard-working taxpayers. I believe the policies being carried forward by the liberal New York City machine are not in the best interest of all New Yorkers," said Senator Bob Antonacci.

"Our state is facing very serious challenges when it comes to things like affordability and job creation, and the fact that in the remaining days of session we are focusing on providing those who are in our country illegally with driver's licenses is concerning to say the very least. I wholeheartedly oppose this measure, which could open our state up to security risks, cause voter fraud, and saddle local governments with another added expense," said Senator

Patty Ritchie.

“Privileges, including driver’s licenses, should not be extended to individuals who are in our country illegally. This legislation is far too broad and is an affront to law-abiding citizens. It not only jeopardies public safety, it forces yet another unfunded mandate on local governments,” said Senator Patrick Gallivan.

“I am grateful for the millions of people who have immigrated to our country and become legal citizens. Though it isn’t an easy process, they’ve done it. Naturalization ceremonies are wonderful to celebrate because we are welcoming new people to make our nation stronger. Notwithstanding the concerns raised by county clerks and others, my belief is that accommodating those here illegally by offering driver’s licenses sends the wrong message,” said Senator Betty Little.

“As a former County Clerk who ran a large Auto Bureau system, I know first-hand the damage this law will do. It will cause rampant voter fraud and block law enforcement’s ability to access critical DMV data to keep the public safe,” said Senator Chris Jacobs.

“As always, Albany’s new leaders are doing their best to pass extreme legislation that goes above and beyond what any other state is doing on this issue. What’s worse is they are ignoring the voices of countless New Yorkers and continuing the trend of putting law-breakers ahead of law-abiders. While I fully understand the argument about the need to make our roads safer, I have tremendous concerns with this bill as it is currently written. Other states that have implemented this legislation have included stringent restrictions and important safeguards for vetting applicants that the bill here in New York lacks. As a former local legislator, I also worry about the financial burdens it will place on localities and local taxpayers that are already stretched too thin. Albany’s new leaders need to re-evaluate their priorities before the end of this legislative session,” said Senator Sue Serino.

Over two-thirds of states do not allow illegal immigrants to drive at all, and for good reason. Many states use their DMVs to enroll voters, and New York does as well creating new concerns here over voter fraud. New York does not have any voter identification laws, unlike 35 other states.

The handful of states that permit illegal immigrants to obtain licenses require substantially tighter proof of identification and may impose limitations on driving to incentivize naturalization.

While advocates claim that states freely grant licenses to illegal immigrants, that claim is patently false. For example, Utah only allows illegal immigrants to obtain licenses for a period of one-year; the District of Columbia offers limited purpose licenses; Connecticut requires that an illegal applicant file for citizenship; and many remaining states require a tax identification number, tax returns or proof that an illegal immigrant has become the dependent of a state taxpayer.

None of those states solely rely on foreign documents for identification purposes.

The New York Green Light bill does none of those things and creates a disincentive to naturalization when coupled with other initiatives passed by Democrats this year, like free college tuition for illegal immigrants.

It also does nothing, as advocates claim, to insure that an illegal motorist remains at the scene of a serious accident if it could involve a potential felony charge which could mean deportation and that individual could still choose to flee.

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## 2019-S1747A

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Relates to the "driver's license access and privacy act"; repealer

January 16, 2019

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **Luis R. Sepúlveda**

Do you support this bill?