



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Griffo, Picente, Maciol, DePerno and Carpinelli outline concerns with 'Green Light Bill'

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO June 11, 2019

| ISSUE: **DRIVER'S LICENSES FOR IMMIGRANTS**

New York State Deputy Minority Leader Joseph Griffo, R-I-C-Rome, Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr., Oneida County Sheriff and New York State Sheriff's Association President Rob Maciol, Lewis County Sheriff Michael Carpinelli and Oneida County Clerk Sandy DePerno today raised concerns they have with the "Green Light Bill."

The legislation would allow illegal immigrants to apply for standard driver's licenses using forms of foreign identification.

The New York Association of County Clerks opposes the legislation since they cannot vet documents from other countries. This legislative change also will result in the need for additional staff to assist with language translation needs, according to the association. While some county operated motor vehicle departments have translators on staff or systems in place to help with such needs, this function is scaled for current need levels and is limited to a handful of languages. If this legislation passes, estimates of over 200,000 new applicants will be immediately eligible for licenses. Counties would have to pick up the tab for hiring employees to deal with an influx of applicants as well.

Law enforcement officials also have expressed concerns that the legislation could affect public safety and make it more difficult for law enforcement agencies to do their jobs.

An additional concern with the legislation is that many states, including New York, use their Departments of Motor Vehicles to enroll voters. Since New York does not have voter identification laws like the majority of other states do, this bill also could increase the potential for voter fraud.

Deputy Minority Leader Griffo said, “Despite legitimate concerns from law enforcement, opposition from county clerks and two Siena College polls that show New Yorkers do not support 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.”

Oneida County Executive Anthony J. Picente Jr. said, “This bill is the epitome of what’s wrong with downstate politicians. This is an ill-advised plan that is opposed by law enforcement, county clerks and the majority of New Yorkers. Albany needs to stop going down its current path, and focus on the issues that matter to people here in Oneida County and Central New York: Repairing their aging infrastructure, growing jobs, fighting the opioid epidemic and providing upstate counties real relief from crushing mandates and regulations.”

Oneida County Clerk DePerno said, “As your Oneida County Clerk, I am strongly opposed to the ‘Greenlight Bill.’ I serve as the county-level commissioner of Motor Vehicles working in

partnership with the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles. My staff is not equipped to verify the authenticity of a foreign document such as a birth certificate. I feel that if this bill is passed, it will be force my DMV employees and myself to be immigration authorities, which is a federal responsibility. Legislation to provide driver licenses to people who are here illegally circumvents federal law. I was sworn to uphold the U.S. Constitution. This bill will put my fellow county clerks and myself in a compromising position of violating our oath of office. Utica is a melting pot for many of our immigrants. They have come to this area, went through the process and are now an asset to our community. Allowing illegal immigrants to circumvent the system is just plain wrong. As Oneida County Clerk, I will not provide driver's licenses to illegal immigrants."

Oneida County Sheriff and New York State Sheriff's Association President Maciol said, "There are certain provisions contained in this legislation that should be of serious concern to all New York State law enforcement agencies. Should this bill become law, my office would have to certify to the state Department of Motor Vehicles, as a condition of maintaining access to their records databases, that I will not turn over any of the information I obtain to federal authorities responsible for enforcing civil immigration law. I also would be required to keep records of my own about how every piece of data I obtain from the Department of Motor Vehicles is used for a period of five years. This record retention proposal would be nearly impossible, without significant expense, for any agency to maintain. Additionally, this bill would require that the Department of Motor Vehicles notify individuals when federal immigration authorities do access their records through a judicial warrant or subpoena, which I believe creates a serious risk to public safety. I would strongly urge the legislature to consider these issues, which will negatively impact all law enforcement as well as the public."

Lewis County Sheriff Carpinelli said, “The ‘Green Light Bill’ is a dangerous piece of legislation that will tie the hands of justice and puts the public and law enforcement in danger. I am concerned this legislation, which I believe is a political stunt, will have a detrimental effect on law enforcement agencies and could lead to more voter fraud taking place in New York State.”

More than two-thirds of states do not allow illegal immigrants to drive at all. The handful of states that do permit illegal immigrants to obtain licenses require substantially tighter proof of identification and may impose limitations on driving to incentivize naturalization. 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.

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