



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senate Republicans: Red Light The “Green Light” Law To Keep New Yorkers Safe

JOHN J. FLANAGAN February 26, 2020

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The Senate Republican Conference today brought an amendment to the floor to repeal the “Green Light” Law and end the imminent danger the Democrat policy poses to public safety. Every single Senate Democrat voted against the common-sense proposal, once again demonstrating a total disregard for all law-abiding New Yorkers and the law enforcement agencies tasked with protecting them.

Last year, when Senate Democrats passed the Green Light Law, they openly admitted that they wanted to prevent border patrol, ICE, and DHS from accessing the DMV database. The database is the starting point for criminal investigations. Highlights from the day the Green Light Law passed the Senate are [available online](#).

“The only thing that gets a Green Light under this bill is lawlessness. The lessons of 9/11 led to data sharing between law enforcement agencies, which is now stopped because of Democrats. CBP, ICE, and DHS apprehend individuals who commit the worst types of crimes in our country and yet, they are hindered from accessing a tool that is the first step in every investigation. Our residents who are Trusted Travelers, and who are screened in real time, shouldn’t have to suffer either as Democrats put policy over public safety,” said Senate Republican Leader John J. Flanagan.

“The Green Light Law was overwhelmingly not supported by New York residents, makes it more difficult for law enforcement agencies and county clerks to do their jobs, places additional financial burdens on counties that are already stretched to the limit and, most recently, has caused inconveniences for many law-abiding New Yorkers. This law is another example of the irresponsible policies, proposals, and initiatives that flaunt longstanding federal laws pertaining to citizenship that have resulted from one-party and one-region control of state government. While I understand that there is a need for immigration reforms, such changes should be done at the federal level and not on a state by state basis,” **said Senate Republican Deputy Leader Joseph Griffo.**

“Allowing illegal aliens to obtain drivers licenses undermines federal immigration law and sends the wrong message to the hardworking taxpayers of our state who continue to play by the rules. Not only does the ‘Green Light’ law undercut federal immigration law, but it endangers those law enforcement agencies tasked with protecting our homeland security. In a state that was home to the worst terror attack ever committed on American soil, one would think our state government would be extra vigilant in vetting those who can receive official state identification. Unfortunately, Governor Cuomo and state Democrats continue to

hinder these security efforts and risk the safety of New York's residents for political gain," **said Senator Robert Ort.**

"The Green Light Law is another brazen assault on public safety by New York Democrats. While granting drivers' licenses to those who have broken our laws was bad enough, Governor Cuomo and his allies in the Legislature took it one dangerous step further by blocking DHS and other federal agencies from accessing the DMV records they need to vet applicants to the Trusted Traveler programs, as well as combat terrorism, apprehend drug and human traffickers, and keep New Yorkers safe from a host of crimes. In bringing this amendment forward, we were seeking to restore the rule of law and common sense to this state. Democrats continually choose to side with the lawless, rather than the law-abiding. Between the Green Light Law and the bail reform disaster, New York is remaking itself into a haven for criminals," **said Senator George Borrello.**

"We can't continue to let New York's One Party Rule put their radical, far-left agenda before the safety of law-abiding citizens in communities across our state. I ask my colleagues from either side of the aisle to join us in putting public safety and common sense before those who break the law. We must stand together for what's right, no matter our political affiliation," **said Senator Fred Akshar.**

"I voted against the Green Light Law because the thought of giving a driver's license, a secure identification document, to someone who is intentionally breaking the law was inconceivable. Now we are seeing additional consequences of this bad public policy – putting law enforcement agents and the public at risk while allowing dangerous criminals to avoid detection. We cannot wait any longer to repeal this reckless law," **said Senator James L. Seward.**

“My bottom line is straightforward: What’s best for public safety? For this governor and this Legislature to have public safety keep taking a back seat to ideology or short-term political gain is wrong – it’s irresponsible, it’s dangerous, and it puts all of us at risk. Law and order matters,” **said Senator Tom O’Mara.**

“The work done by our immigration and customs officers is too important and too dangerous to expect that they should do it with their hands tied behind their backs. Unfortunately, that’s the real-world effect of the Green Light Law. Denying these dedicated men and women access to DMV records puts them at risk and makes it more difficult for them to keep all of us safe. Representing a district that borders Canada, I can’t overstate how important it is to quickly fix this problem so that the commerce on which our economy depends isn’t impeded and that public safety is assured,” **said Senator Betty Little.**

“This was a bad idea when Eliot Spitzer tried to do it in 2007 and I led the fight to stop it then, and it’s a bad idea now to give driver’s licenses to those here illegally. We are a state and a nation of laws, and whenever we exempt people from those laws, it creates chaos. We support immigration but it has to be legal immigration because if we don’t repeal this bill and have a process for becoming a citizen, New York State will continue to be a magnet for those here illegally. My colleagues on the other side of aisle aren’t fooling anyone on this issue. Their endgame is to allow non-citizens voting rights. If that happens the United States of America will become the United States of Non-Citizens,” **said Senator Jim Tedisco.**

“Requiring proper documentation to ensure public safety for New York residents and visitors, as well as our men and women of law enforcement, should be paramount. Unlike other states, New York’s Green Light Law went too far and needs to be fixed,” **said Senator Joe Robach.**

“What we are seeing now is a perfect example of what happens when lawmakers rush to ‘reform’ without considering the impact their actions will have on those they serve. When it passed, I voted ‘no’ on the misguided measure because the Green Light law left county clerks without the resources needed to properly verify foreign documents, putting public safety at risk. Now, we are seeing that the law is having very real consequences for legal residents and that’s just not right. It is time for Albany to put public safety first and repeal the Green Light Law,” **said Senator Sue Serino.**

“Like bail reform, the Green Light Law was badly written, poorly conceived, and puts our communities at risk. I’m proud that our conference unanimously opposed this when it first passed and that we are acting today to repeal it. It’s sad that Democrats continually choose the opposite course and in doing so put politics before public safety,” **said Senator Rich Funke.**

“The reckless, poorly written Green Light Law rammed through by Governor Cuomo and the Albany Democrats takes New York back to a pre-9/11 mentality that is dangerous to our citizens and harmful to our national security – outcomes that I repeatedly warned against throughout 2019. We heard firsthand yesterday from U.S. Department of Homeland Security officials – experts serving on the front lines of keeping us safe – that the state DMV’s refusal to share information with ICE and Customs and Border Protection is literally putting the lives of our law enforcement officers at risk and making our country less safe. There is no question that the terrible and dangerous Green Light Law must be repealed – and law-abiding New Yorkers should hold everyone who voted for the Democrats’ monstrosity accountable for putting politics before public safety,” **said Senator Daphne Jordan.**

“By obstructing law enforcement’s ability to protect our citizens, weakening our border security and disrupting our economy, the Green Light Law has proven to be the unmitigated disaster I feared it would be. It is unconscionable that the Governor and Democrat majority

are willing to sacrifice the safety and rights of law-abiding citizens at the expense of people who entered our state and nation illegally. This law must be repealed immediately,” **said Senator Chris Jacobs.**

“I have been a steadfast opponent of the Green Light Law, a measure that I believe opens our state up to security risks and voter fraud, as well as burdens our local governments with another unfunded mandate. Just as concerning is that it puts our federal law enforcement at risk, as it restricts their access to critically important DMV data. Law enforcement officials are now forced to enter situations without a clear understanding of what or who they are encountering when vehicles enter the country, are part of a traffic stop – or when they attempt to make an arrest or rescue a victim. It’s for these reasons that I am joining with my colleagues to call for the repeal of this law,” **said Senator Patty Ritchie.**

“The Green Light Law is a threat to our public safety. We have seen the negative ramifications of the passage of the bill and still nothing has been done to remedy this issue. I have heard from law enforcement, local government, and residents regarding their concerns and the negative impact it has had,” **said Senator Mike Ranzenhofer.**

The so-called Green Light Law ([S1747B](#)) passed the Senate and was signed into law last year, allowing illegal immigrants to obtain drivers’ licenses. Presented by supporters as the “same law” adopted in other states, New York’s backdoor “Sanctuary State” version contained a provision that prevents the Department of Homeland Security and other border protection agencies from accessing records contained in the state’s Department of Motor Vehicles – something no other state does.

Earlier this month, [DHS announced a suspension](#) on New Yorkers’ enrollment eligibility for multiple “Trusted Traveler” programs in direct response to the Green Light Law’s implementation. According to federal officials, the integrity of these popular international

travel programs could no longer be guaranteed due to the statewide block on DMV information sharing.

The Green Light Law prevents U.S. Customs and Border Protection and other federal agencies from accessing DMV data used in crucial law enforcement operations, as well as trade, travel, and homeland security matters. Information sharing between New York and the Federal Government had been used to investigate and apprehend hundreds of terrorists, drug traffickers, human traffickers, and financial criminals, among others who pose threats to national security and the public safety of New Yorkers.

This is no longer the case under Democrats' various "Sanctuary" policies, as shown in the case of Maria Fuertes, a 92-year-old immigrant in New York City who was murdered by an illegal immigrant from Guyana in January. Recently, a granddaughter of Ms. Fuertes [appeared at the White House](#) to slam these senseless policies as the direct cause of her grandmother's death.

Governor Cuomo has [changed his position](#) multiple times on information sharing with federal officials since the suspension of Trusted Traveler programs. Because he cannot single-handedly change a policy he signed into law, the state legislature is the only body that can begin to fix the public safety crisis Democrats created last year. Unfortunately, the Senate Republican Conference's common sense solution to repeal the Green Light Law was rejected by Senate Democrats today.