

Immigration Advocates Set Ambitious Albany Agenda

Posted on Feb 27, Posted by [David Howard King](#) Category [Civil Rights](#)

The New York City Immigration Coalition may have its work cut out for itself this year: Its 10-point agenda is ambitious and will require action from Albany as well as cooperation from law enforcement.

The groups top policy priority is expanding access to college by passing New York State's version of the DREAM Act. The State's DREAM act which is backed by Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Council Speaker Christine Quinn would open up tuition assistance to students regardless of their immigration status.

Despite massive grassroots pressure, Gov. Andrew Cuomo did not make the DREAM legislation a part of his State of the State Speech in January. The Democratic-controlled Assembly has passed a version of the DREAM Act in the past and seems poised to do so again.

The Senate is a different story. The breakaway Independent Democratic Conference has indicated major support for the legislation but Senate Republicans have generally been opposed to the measure and have prevented floor votes. To add to the difficulty advocates face, it is unclear how many in the Democratic conference actually support the legislation.

Democratic Sen. Joe Addabbo said at a debate in October that he felt his constituents had a hard enough time finding money sending their children to college so he could not support the DREAM Act. His Republican opponent, Councilman Eric Ulrich, said at the time that he supported "some version" of the legislation.

The DREAM Act could make its way into law as part of some grand bargain, but at the moment the governor's priority seems to be getting a minimum wage hike through the Legislature. But that will likely require concessions on progressive items.

The group's second policy priority for the year is improving public safety by limiting city and state police interaction with federal immigration enforcement activities. Advocates are celebrating success on that front today, with the City Council currently considering legislation that would further distance the city's Department of Correction and police from cooperating with federal immigration authorities.

Under the law, the city would not honor any detention requests where immigrants are youthful offenders, don't have significant records and have only been accused of low-level offenses. The city will honor detainer requests for immigrants who are accused of or have been convicted of major crimes or who match descriptions of those on terrorist watch lists.

Earlier in his term Cuomo, [withdrew](#) New York State from the federal Secure Communities program that mandates local law enforcement agencies share digital fingerprints of arrested immigrants with US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.

[Advocates said](#) the practice lead to the deportation of numerous innocent immigrants.

However, federal authorities who had earlier suggested Secure Communities was voluntary insisted state involvement was not optional and Cuomo's withdrawal was meaningless.

A number of the issues in the top 10 also rely on funding and focus from the state budget.

The rest of the top 10 includes:

#3 Enhance Access to Health Care

#4 Protect and Expand Immigrant Services

#5 Protect Immigrant Workers

#6 Support Adult Education and Job Training

#7 Promote College Readiness For English Language Learners

#8 Support Immigrant Parent Engagement in Their Children's Future

#9 Protect Immigrants From Harsh Immigration Enforcement

#10 Provide Disaster Relief to Victims Regardless of Immigration Status and Provide Safe Working Conditions for Disaster Relief Workers

For more on #10, check out this [National Public Radio story](#) .

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