

## In-state tuition urged for N.J.'s immigrants living here illegally

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JERSEY CITY -- A state panel on immigrant policy released recommendations Monday that include in-state tuition eligibility and driving privileges for immigrants living here illegally, as well as the creation of a commission on New Americans. Gov. Jon S. Corzine, who convened the Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigrant Policy in August, said Monday he agrees that undocumented immigrants, especially those brought to the U.S. as children and attending local schools, should be able to pay in-state tuition at the state's public colleges.

About 10 states allow undocumented immigrants to pay in-state tuition rates, and similar federal legislation, called the Dream Act, has been proposed in Congress.

Corzine said most of New Jersey's immigrants are in the state legally, and that the children of the state's estimated 400,000 immigrants living here illegally "are not here because they chose to be, but because of their families, and they should not be discriminated against."

Corzine differed with the panel on extending driving privileges in New Jersey, saying that's an issue for the federal government to decide.

"There's a fundamental flaw to letting people drive without insurance and licenses," Corzine said. "Nevertheless, New Jersey has very strict laws on driver's licenses."

A recent Monmouth University/ Gannett New Jersey Poll finds that most New Jerseyans oppose offering driver's licenses or in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants living in the state.

Sixty-two percent oppose allowing them to get some type of limited driver's license. Just 33 percent favor the idea.

Similarly, few New Jerseyans favor offering in-state college tuition rates to undocumented immigrants or their children living in the state. Only 20 percent favor in-state tuition for illegal immigrants; 32 percent favor offering it to their children.

The tuition and drivers licensee recommendations were among dozens of issues addressed in the report, which looked at ways to better integrate immigrants -- who account for more than 20 percent of the state's population -- into all aspects of society.

The report recommends several ways to make the delivery of federally mandated social services more culturally relevant, as well as improve conditions for immigrants in education, health and the labor force, among other areas.

Corzine said he'll push lawmakers to approve the creation of the state commission on immigrant issues, although funding for new programs is expected to be scarce in the current economic

climate. If approved, New Jersey would become one of the few states with a government entity dedicated to immigrant affairs.

The governor also is urging a reexamination of an immigration directive from the New Jersey's Attorney General ordering police to notify immigration authorities when they arrest someone suspected of being an illegal immigrant. He's also backing moratorium on federal immigration raids in the state, which he says often tear mixed-status families apart.

Some immigrant advocacy groups welcomed the panel's report as a good first step.

"It's not a one-shot deal, but provides a blueprint for the future," said Shai Goldstein, New Jersey Immigration Policy Network's executive director, who was a panel member. "This is not just for the state of New Jersey, this is a national model, because we've seen stops and starts when people just try to deal with immigration issue by issue."