

Corz backs call to charge 'illegals' in-state tuition

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

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In Jersey City yesterday, Gov. Jon Corzine welcomed a state immigration panel's recommendation that undocumented, or illegal, immigrants be charged in-state college tuition rates. But Corzine was cooler to other ideas that might clash with federal policy.

Speaking at the Gilligan Student Union Building at New Jersey City University, Corzine supported most of the recommendations by the Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigrant Policy.

State Public Advocate Ronald K. Chen chaired the advisory panel, which deliberated for 18 months. Chen said the group started with the premise that immigration enriches the state culturally and economically.

Corzine embraced a proposal to change state law so undocumented students are charged in-state tuition rates. Currently undocumented residents have to pay the much higher out-of-state rates.

"They are here because their families brought them here," Corzine said. "They should not be discriminated against."

Christopher W. Lynch, vice president of communications for the NJCU Student Government Organization, felt it unfair of Corzine to propose budget cuts for state colleges while supporting low tuition rates for illegal immigrants who "pay no taxes."

Blue Ribbon Panel member Shai Goldstein, of the state Immigration Policy Network, called it a misconception that undocumented immigrants don't pay taxes, saying they pay sales taxes, property taxes through their rents, and about 70 percent of them pay income taxes.

"We are not saying that anyone should be given special privileges," Goldstein added. "Children should not be denied an education."

Besides the tuition proposal, Corzine said he supports the panel's call for a moratorium on Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids, saying there are both social and legal problems with the raids that often break up families.

But the governor said New Jersey cannot unilaterally change the law to allow undocumented immigrants to receive driver's licenses. Those changes, he said, would have to start at the federal level....