



THE COALITION FOR HUMANE IMMIGRANT RIGHTS OF LOS ANGELES

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CALIFORNIA POLITICS IN BRIEF

The California Legislature is already in full swing. The most pressing topics being discussed at the state capitol are the Governor's proposed budget, the implications for California of President Bush's proposed budget, and health care reform. Unfortunately, during this legislative cycle conservative legislators have introduced legislation to deny public benefits to undocumented immigrants, crack down on employers who hire them, and give local law enforcement new tools to arrest them. However, some legislators are looking to expand opportunities to all the residents of California by providing subsidized health coverage, and workers as well as civil rights.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S PROPOSED BUDGET AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CALIFORNIA

On February 5 2007, President Bush released his federal budget. The proposed budget calls for reductions on domestic programs that have a direct impact on immigrant communities. The reductions would begin in 2008. A reduction of funding to these programs means cuts to service levels and/or increases in appropriation by state and local governments to offset the proposed cuts.

Education

Under the President's proposal, vocational and adult education programs that support secondary schools and community college career training programs would lose funding of \$471.8 million between 2008 and 2012.

Human Service

Funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) would be reduced. This program would not longer be able to assist approximately 55,600 children and women in California by 2012.

Funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, which provides home-heating assistance to low-income families and elderly individuals in California, would be reduced. It is estimated that about 30,300 Californians would lose access to assistance in 2008.

In addition, the President's budget includes reductions to the Medicaid Program.

Proposed Budget for 2007-08 Fiscal Year

The Governor has proposed significant changes to the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. This program provides cash assistance and services to low-income families with children.

The Governor's proposal:

1. Eliminates cash assistance for children if their parents do not fully comply with CalWORKs requirements after 90 days of notification;
2. Reduces assistance to children if their parents have reached the time limit of 60 cumulative months;
3. Terminates cash assistance after 60 months for certain children whose parents are ineligible for the program. This includes children of undocumented immigrants, and children of parents who have been convicted of drug-related offenses;
4. Freezes the Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) on the CalWORKs grants for a third consecutive year. As a result, these grants are insufficient to provide for the current cost of living in California.

Most legislators in leadership positions within both the Assembly and the Senate oppose the Governor's proposed budget to cut funding to CalWORKs.

Immigrant Programs

The Governor's budget proposal maintains \$3 million in funding for the Naturalization Services Program (NSP) for 2007-08. NSP is a state funded program that assists legal permanent residents in obtaining citizenship. The US Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) has proposed to increase fees, most drastically an 80% increase for naturalization applications and 178% increase for adjustment of status. Therefore, we are asking the Legislature to increase the funding for the Naturalization Services Program to \$7 million dollars.

Join the Advocacy Campaign

The first Budget hearings are on March 28 in the Assembly Budget sub-committee on Health and Human Services; and on March 29 in the Senate Budget sub-committee on Health and Human Services. Contact Joseph Villela (jvillela@chirla.org) to join list serves, calling actions, letter writing campaigns, and legislative visits.

Below is a summary of bills relevant to immigrants that CHIRLA will be monitoring this legislative year.

SUPPORT

CIVIL RIGHTS

AB 43 (Leno): Would enact the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act, which would define a marriage as a personal relationship arising out of a civil contract between two individuals.

AB 46 (Tran): Would make voter intimidation a felony crime punishable by imprisonment for no less than 2 years.

WORKERS RIGHTS

AB 71 (Dymally): Seeks to have an automatic index adjustment to inflation of the minimum wage on January of each year.

AB 448 (Arambula): Would permit employees to recover liquidated damages in complaints brought before the Labor Commission alleging payment of less than the state minimum wage.

SB 940 (Yee): Would mandate temporary service employers to pay in full for the services of an employee whose services are no longer required within 24 hours after the employee has been terminated.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

AB 976 (Calderon): Would amend the California Fair Employment and Housing Act to include citizenship and immigration status within the list of unlawful bases for discrimination in housing accommodations.

SB 1 (Cedillo): Would create an Office of Immigrant Affairs that would coordinate existing state services and programs for immigrants and their families; act as a repository of information on immigrant issues and affairs; advocate and promote cooperation and understanding between government agencies and immigrant citizens, and assist immigrants towards naturalization.

AJR 16 (Levine): Urges local, state, and federal officials to take steps related to recognizing and protecting the human rights of immigrants and publicly denouncing xenophobia and anti-immigrant bias as having no place in within the immigration reform debate.

OPPOSE

UNDOCUMENTED INMATES

AB 39 (Benoit); and AB 458 (Cook): Would require the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to demand in writing to the Attorney General to take into custody all inmates who are incarcerated in California's correctional system and who are undocumented.

AB 1081 (Garrick): Would require the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to enter into an agreement with the Department of Homeland Security to train personnel to identify and start the deportation process of inmates that are undocumented.

AB 648 (Adams): Would provide an additional 10 years imprisonment for an inmate who was convicted of a felony and was then deported.

RESTRICT ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

AB 286 (Cook) and SB 268 (McClintock): Would repeal the exemption from paying in-state tuition at the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and University of California system, given to students that have attended high school in California for 3 or more years, and who have graduated from a California high school or attained the equivalent, including undocumented students.

AB 271 (Cook): Seeks to restrict access to essential services by unauthorized immigrants, and would require proof of citizenship to receive any form of state-funded benefits.

SB 58 (Hollingsworth): Would eliminate cash assistance for children if their parents do not fully comply with CalWORKs requirements after 90 days of notification; reduce assistance to children if their parents have reached the time limit of 60 cumulative months; and terminate cash assistance after 60 months for certain children whose parents are ineligible for the program. This includes children of undocumented immigrants, and children of parents who have been convicted of drug-related offenses.

PROOF OF IDENTIFICATION AND DRIVER'S LICENSES

AB 9 (Huff): Would require citizens to present proof of citizenship to a member of the precinct board before receiving a ballot.

SUPPORT

AJR 18 (Solorio): Urges the Legislature to oppose the proposed increase in the fees in the naturalization process by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

EDUCATION

SB 160 (Cedillo): Seeks to provide state financial aid to undocumented students that wish to or are attending institutions of higher education. Students that have attended secondary schools would also be eligible for in-state tuition and state aid.

INTER-HUMAN RELATIONS

AB 675 (Eng): Would establish a Tolerance Education Pilot Program to promote instruction in public schools on tolerance and inter-group relations as part of the instruction in the history/social science content standards.

OPPOSE

SB 60 (Cedillo) Oppose Unless Amended:

Would allow undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses, while implementing the federal Real ID Act, whose main goal is to make state driver's licenses a badge of immigration status. The driver's licenses that would be given to undocumented immigrants would be marked differently than those given to citizens. In CHIRLA's analysis, this bill does not contain adequate protections against discrimination and racial profiling.

WORK VERIFICATION

SB 189 (Harman): Would require the Department of Personnel Administration and all other employers to verify legal status or authorization to work in the United States using the Basic Pilot Program.

AB 107 (Smyth): Would require any contractor that applies for a state contract to sign under penalty of perjury that he/she will verify the legal status of his/her workers.

CRIMINALIZATION OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

SB 3 (Harman): Seeks to charge undocumented immigrants who reside in California with trespassing.