



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 funding deductions to human services programs and health care reform. Though 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, all of these proposals have been defeated at this point. Meanwhile, more productive initiatives that seek to integrate immigrants into our state are moving forward. Contact Joseph Villela at 213-353-1782 or via e-mail jvillela@chirla.org to join list servs, calling actions, letter-writing campaigns, legislative visits and for more information.

California Health Care Reform Campaign

After a long wait, legislation aiming to reform the health care system in California must now meet the first deadline at the end of April when bills must make it out of their first policy committee in order to be considered for a floor vote. This includes those bills authored by legislative leaders such as AB 8 (Nuñez), SB 840 (Kuehl), and SB 48 (Perata).

On April 18, SB 840 (Kuehl) was heard and passed the Senate Health committee.

On April 24, AB 8 (Nuñez) was heard and passed the Assembly Health committee.

On April 25, SB 48 (Perata) was heard and passed the Senate Health committee.

Common threads of these proposals include: expanding public programs to cover all children under three times the poverty level; establishing some basic standard for employer contributions to health care; as well as a principle of 'shared responsibility' by employers, individuals, insurers and the state.

The Governor has not indicated what legislative vehicle he is planning to utilize for his proposal to reform our health care system.

At the federal level, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is up for reauthorization, in which the "Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act" (ICHIA) is included. ICHIA would grant states the option to cover lawfully residing immigrant children and pregnant women under SCHIP and Medicaid. This effort has a strong bipartisan support and it is critical to ensuring that California has enough federal funds to reform its health care system.

Source: Health Access, National Immigration Law Center

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, which is an increase of CalWORKs grants of about \$30 dollars to families. As a result, these grants are insufficient to provide for the current cost of living in California.

The Assembly Sub-committee on Human and Services has rejected the Governor's proposed cuts with a direct impact on children. However, they did not vote on the Cost of Living Adjustment freezes. The Senate Sub-committee on Human Services heard this issue, but did not vote on it.

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.

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.

Status: Passed Assembly Judiciary committee. Referred to Appropriations committee.

AB 1648 (Leno) & SB 1019 (Romero): Would overturn a California Supreme Court decision in *Copley Press v. Superior Court*, that prevents local civilian police review agencies from holding public hearings or releasing records related to police misconduct complaints.

Status: Held in policy committee without recommendation.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

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.

Status: Hearing date not yet set.

IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

AB 976 (Calderon): Would prohibit any local government to compel a landlord to compile, disclose, report, provide, or otherwise, take any action regarding a tenant or a prospective tenant based on the immigration or citizenship status of that tenant. This would also prohibit a landlord from performing any of these acts.

Status: Passed Assembly Judiciary committee.

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.

Status: Passed Senate Human Services committee. Referred to Senate Appropriations committee and held under suspense file.

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.

Status: AB 39 failed to pass; AB 458 hearing canceled at the request of the author.

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.

Status: Failed to pass.

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

Status: Failed to pass.

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.

Status: AB 286 hearing date not set yet. SB 268 failed to pass.

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.

Status: Hearing date not set yet.

SUPPORT

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 within the immigration reform debate.

Status: May 8 hearing date in Assembly Judiciary committee.

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

Status: Passed Assembly Floor. Moves to the Senate.

EDUCATION

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

Status: Passed Senate Higher Education committee. Referred to Appropriations committee. Hearing date April 26.

INTER-GROUP 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.

Status: Hearing cancelled at the request of the author.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

SB 382 (Orepeza): Would allow new citizens to register to vote after the deadline has passed, fourteen days prior to an election or before the closing of the polls.

Status: Passed Senate committee on elections, reapportionment, and constitutional amendments.

OPPOSE

SB 58 (Hollingsworth): Would eliminate cash assistance for children if their parents do not fully comply with CalWORKs requirements after 90 days of notification; reduces assistance to children if their parents have reached the time limit of 60 cumulative months; and 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.

Status: Hearing canceled at the request of the author.

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.

Status: Failed to pass.

SB 60 (Cedillo): 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. Therefore we are opposing this bill unless is amended.

Status: Passed Senate Transportation committee. Referred to Senate Appropriations committee.

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.
Status: Hearing date not set yet.

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.
Status: Failed passage.

CRIMINALIZATION OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS

SB 3 (Harman): Seeks to charge undocumented immigrants who reside in California with trespassing.
Status: Hearing date not set yet.