

A Retreat from Safety

NILC statement regarding New York governor's announcement that he will rescind his driver's license proposal.

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New York Governor Eliot Spitzer's announcement yesterday that he will rescind his proposal to grant driver's licenses to all New York residents, regardless of their immigration status, represents a sad triumph of politics over rational public policy. Denying driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants will not make us safer and will not fix our broken immigration system.

Governor Spitzer had it right the first time. Allowing immigrants to obtain licenses would have saved lives by ensuring that law enforcement officials know who they are dealing with in an emergency, and would have saved money by reducing the number of uninsured drivers and, thus, hit-and-run accidents. Security experts have confirmed that it is counterproductive to deny identification documents to undocumented immigrants.

Although the opposition to Spitzer's policy was motivated in part by frustration with our flawed immigration system, fear-mongering also played a big role. It is a shame that this rhetoric prevailed over a common-sense approach to making all New Yorkers safer.

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