

Corzine reviews immigration panel report

By GLENN TOWNES

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New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine received a comprehensive analysis regarding the Garden State's policies on immigration in April from an advisory panel he appointed nearly two years ago to address the issue.

In August 2007, Corzine named a Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigrant Policy to study the issues and concerns of immigrants living in New Jersey. The panel presented Corzine with a detailed list of recommendations and modifications to various and existing immigration policies. Currently, more than 1.7 million New Jersey residents are foreign born and comprise about 40 percent of all advanced degree holders. In addition, one in five of all small business owners are foreign born.

"New Jersey's strength has always been in its diversity," Corzine said at a press conference highlighting the immigration report. "And all it takes to tap into this resource is a fundamental change in how we work with the immigration population—the economy is clearly priority one, priority two and priority three."

Key recommendations of the immigration panel include:

- creation of a Commission on New Americans to oversee immigrant issues

- the issuance of driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants

- development of an objective data collection standard for law enforcement

- allowing in-state tuition rates for foreign-born New Jersey students

- cultural competency guidelines that will enable the state to effectively communicate with those with limited English proficiency

Corzine acknowledged some of the recommendations, but questioned others, noting that they were impractical and perhaps even unfathomable—particularly at the state level.

"Recommendations cannot be accomplished without a comprehensive policy at the federal level, and driver's licenses for the undocumented is one of them," he said. "This is a tremendously important, but complex issue that cannot be resolved with piecemeal solutions at the state level absent of a comprehensive federal policy."

The issue of immigration has **(Continued on Page 40)** been a hot-button issue for several years. A number of protest marches and rallies have been held across the country in recent years, calling for changes in U.S. immigration policies and procedures.

At a recent event hosted in Washington, D.C., by the Immi-

gration Policy Center, dozens of supporters of immigration reform touted the economic benefits of overhauling current policies.

"Comprehensive immigration reform is the only way we can level the playing field for all workers," said Esther Lopez, international director of civil rights and community action for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. "Having legalization be part of a broader immigration reform, we can create an immigration system that works for the American worker."

And David Kalick, a senior fellow at the Fiscal Policy Institute—a New York-based think tank—said reformation is about much more than being for or against the rights of immigrants. "It's about having an immigration system that functions and addresses what I think everyone recognizes as a broken system," he said. Lopez and Kalick made their public comments during a press briefing at the Immigration Policy Center in Washington on Monday.

Corzine said he would continue to review the immigration panel's report before implementing any final or permanent changes. To view a complete listing of the Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigrant Policy, visit the New Jersey government website at <http://nj.gov/governor/news/newsletters>.

