

House Republican Press Release

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Tuition for Illegals a Flawed Concept



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The “short” session in Hartford began in early February and will run only 13 weeks. Our primary goal is to “tweak” the budget and prioritize bills for consideration by the General Assembly. I’m surprised, therefore, to see the majority party again raise a controversial bill that was vetoed by Governor Rell. House Bill 5264 seeks to permit illegal immigrants residing in the state to receive in-state tuition rates. The bill’s stated purpose is to increase access to postsecondary education for illegal immigrants. I frankly was disappointed at the debate on the House floor last session, which focused on emotional pleas for the students. I voted against the bill. It passed the House by a slim majority. Fortunately, Governor Rell saved the General Assembly from itself and the State from a bad law with her veto power.

Regardless of how one feels about the issue of illegal immigrants, the bill contained fatal flaws from inception. These fatal flaws will haunt us again. First, if Connecticut chooses to give in-state tuition rates to illegal immigrants, under federal law, the state is exposed to being required to give all non-residents in-state tuition rates. Connecticut taxpayers invest dearly in our educational system by being one of the highest per capita taxpayers in the country. This law not only proposes to give tax subsidies to individuals who do not pay taxes, but exposes Connecticut to higher education costs by reducing tuition rates for anyone that chooses to go to a Connecticut school.

Last session, the bill required that these illegal immigrants would have to make a good faith effort to become legal United States citizens. By requiring this, the majority party argued that the state would be investing in a future workforce for Connecticut employers. This argument, however, failed to recognize that any person in the United States illegally is foreclosed from applying for citizenship under federal law. If these individuals cannot gain citizenship, they cannot seek gainful, legal employment within the United States, let alone Connecticut.

Connecticut is ranked as one of the best states to educate its students. Unfortunately, our students migrate out of Connecticut at one of the highest rates in the country. The House Republicans proposed segregating the income tax of college graduates to assist them in purchasing a home in Connecticut in order to stop this “brain drain” and build our workforce. The majority party entertained the concept and then tucked this proposal on a

shelf. Ironically, they continue to ponder why our middle class in Connecticut is evaporating.

As elected officials, we took an oath to uphold the laws of the State of Connecticut and the United States. Proposed Bill 5264 illustrates a failure to acknowledge federal law and a willingness to recklessly gamble our tax dollars. Connecticut needs to begin tackling the tough issues of controlling real property taxes, providing relief for our seniors, affordable housing, retaining college students for our workforce, and access to affordable healthcare. These bills that encourage illegal immigration to Connecticut is stripping us of our financial check valve, opening up the faucet, and filling the catch basin with more uncontrolled expenses and liabilities.