



IMMIGRANTS: THE LIFEBLOOD OF NEW YORK CITY

Immigrants

The Lifeblood of New York City

Mayor Mike Bloomberg firmly believes that immigrants are the lifeblood of New York City. That's why he has been a staunch advocate for immigrants, locally and on the national stage. The Mayor has long spoken out for comprehensive immigration reform with a pathway to citizenship, and he strongly supports the DREAM Act, which would allow children of undocumented immigrants to become citizens in exchange for attending college or performing military service.

Here in New York City, Mayor Bloomberg has sought to maximize the contributions of immigrants to our economy while facilitating their integration into the civic life of our communities. He established a uniform policy and standards for translation and interpretation services for City agencies that have direct interaction with New Yorkers. Every such City agency now provides language assistance in the top six languages spoken by New Yorkers. The Mayor signed an Executive Order that forbids City workers from asking immigrants about their legal status unless they are suspected of a crime. And he has made sure that services are accessible to immigrant populations by launching the City's first Directory of Services for Immigrants, a resource of more than 250 community-based organizations that offer free or low cost services for all New Yorkers.

From establishing Immigrant Heritage Week to partnering with immigrant advocacy groups to ensure a full and accurate count of all New York City residents in the 2010 Census, Mayor Bloomberg has been a leader when it comes to the concerns and priorities of immigrants.

The Mayor also understands that there is more to do. Immigrants play a critical role in our city's economic recovery, and in the health and strength of our neighborhoods. The Mayor's "Immigrants: The Lifeblood of New York City" plan represents his vision for the third term. Through its bold priorities, policies and partnerships, the plan will:

1. Maximize the Economic Contributions of Immigrants
2. Help Immigrant Children Achieve
3. Integrate Immigrants into our Neighborhoods and Civic Life
4. Protect Immigrants from Exploitation

Ensure that every immigrant New Yorker who wants to learn English will have the opportunity

Immigrants' limited English skills prevent their access to some of the most reliable routes out of poverty. Research overwhelmingly demonstrates the positive link between improved English-language skills and employment, and Census data shows a direct correlation between limited English proficiency and poverty. Unfortunately, the waiting list for English as a Second

Language (ESL) services far exceeds available capacity. Approximately 50,000 New Yorkers currently receive ESL education, but some estimates put the number of ESL-eligible New Yorkers at over one million. The Mayor recognizes that increasing access to English language classes coupled with job-training opportunities could greatly help immigrants in New York get the necessary skills to thrive and succeed in our economy.

Mayor Bloomberg will charge the Office of Immigrant Affairs with developing a 10-year plan to ensure that every New Yorker who wants to learn English will be able to do so. This will require support from Federal, State, private and community-based partners, but the Mayor is taking the first step. And, despite these challenging economic times, the City will make an initial commitment of \$3 million to serve an additional 5,000 immigrant New Yorkers, a ten percent increase. This investment will focus on providing job-based ESL training in collaboration with service providers.

Lobby New York State to adopt a Language Access policy similar to New York City's

In July 2008, Mayor Bloomberg signed an unprecedented Executive Order creating a uniform language access policy for translation and interpretation services for all City agencies. The Executive Order mandates that all City agencies that provide direct public services to New Yorkers create a language access implementation plan in order to ensure meaningful access to their services. Unfortunately, the State's failure to do the same has hampered the ability of City agencies to implement the law fully. The City's social and human service agencies use forms generated by the State agencies, and these forms are often only available in English and Spanish. To provide efficient services to New York's Limited English Proficient (LEP) community, the City is forced to interpret and in some cases translate the State forms, an unnecessary burden on the City that does not get reimbursed. Mayor Bloomberg will ask the Governor to sign an Executive Order establishing a statewide language access policy, which will allow all New Yorkers to truly interact with their government.

Develop a reporting and regulation policy to protect non-English speakers from fraudulent immigration service providers

It is a tragedy when immigrants trying hard to become citizens are exploited by unscrupulous "immigrant service providers." These service providers are non-attorneys who provide fee-based services to immigrants seeking assistance with the completion of legal documents and the filing of immigration forms. Local Law 31 permits such acts, but the result has been a number of non-attorneys engaging in unscrupulous acts abusing the unauthorized practice of law. The Department of Consumer Affairs is charged with enforcement, but without a reporting and regulation policy their efforts are strained and immigrants continue to be abused. Mayor Bloomberg will develop such a policy to protect immigrants trying to achieve their dream of becoming American citizens. His first step will be to convene a Task Force on Immigrant Service Providers, co-chaired by the Commissioners of the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Office of Immigrant Affairs, and comprised of representatives from relevant City agencies, other enforcement agencies, the courts, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders. The Task Force

will report back to the Mayor by October 2010 with a proposal to end the exploitation of immigrants by non-attorneys.

Strengthen legal assistance to immigrants by moving first-year underemployed legal associates into non-profit organizations

Ensuring adequate counsel at the beginning of any immigration proceeding is critical to the success of an immigration case. The importance of quality representation is especially acute for immigrants. The stakes are incredibly high; such proceedings determine whether an individual remains in the country, is reunited with family or is able to work and make a living in the United States. Furthermore, there is a wide disparity in the success rate for those who have legal representation versus those who do not.

In this current economic crisis, first-year legal associates are underemployed. Seizing this moment, the City will partner with private law firms to dispatch deferred legal associates to immigrant communities in need of quality legal assistance and representation. The associates will be deployed for a minimum one-year fellowship. The City will commit \$2 million to the effort to cover a team of supervising attorneys and on-going training of associates and technical assistance in the area of immigration law.

The City will also work with local law schools to engage alumni into a Call to Service for the Legal Community to provide pro-bono legal assistance to immigrants.

Strengthen neighborhoods by engaging immigrant homeowners in the languages they speak

Helping immigrant homeowners is an essential component of Mayor Bloomberg's integration agenda. Owning a home comes with rights and responsibilities, but without language assistance, homeowners with limited English proficiency may not know where to turn on issues such as code enforcement, property tax exemptions, recycling, lead-based paint, pest-control and foreclosure prevention assistance. To confront these challenges, the Mayor will charge his Department of Housing Preservation and Development with conducting Owner's Nights Forums in communities with predominantly immigrant homeowners. For the first time ever, the forums will be conducted in the predominant language of the community. HPD will conduct a minimum of three Owner's Nights per year in different neighborhoods, reaching 2,000 households by 2013.

Help immigrant small business owners in major ethnic communities

Immigrants are entrepreneurial, and this willingness to take the risk of starting a small business has turned so many of our neighborhoods into bustling thoroughfares. But the City can do more to help immigrants thrive. In June 2009, the Department of Small Businesses Services (SBS) unveiled an initiative specifically tailored to help Latino small business owners. This initiative

included a financing fair, a full-day seminar on business assistance and government resources, information resources in Spanish and English available at nyc.gov/latinobusiness, the launch of an online directory on the National Hispanic Business Information Clearinghouse website, and the opening of a new NYC Business Solutions satellite office in Washington Heights.

This targeted strategy to assist Hispanic small businesses will be replicated for other immigrant small business communities. SBS will be charged with developing and executing community-specific strategies for the largest immigrant small business communities in New York City over the third term. Through these efforts, the Mayor will help immigrant small businesses tap into existing resources to strengthen and grow.

Eliminate obstacles to summer youth employment for ELL students

There are approximately 80,000 English Language Learners (ELL's) that are high school students in City schools, and Mayor Bloomberg is committed to providing them with the first-hand experiences that will put them on the pathway to success in the world of work.

New York City's model summer youth employment program currently serves 52,000 young New Yorkers, matching them with jobs at city agencies and private companies. Unfortunately, those private companies don't always have bilingual supervisors to manage students with limited English skills – and so they don't hire them. With the support of private partners, the City will add 1,000 slots specifically for ELL students. Like all program candidates, these students will have the opportunity to participate in a variety of entry-level jobs at government agencies, hospitals, summer camps, nonprofits, small businesses, law firms, museums, sports enterprises, and retail organizations. The City will identify bilingual workplace settings where students can be supported as they acquire job skills and access opportunities for career advancement.

Support undocumented students pursuing higher education.

Mayor Bloomberg wants to ensure that those graduating from City high schools are not prevented from pursuing degrees because of inability to access scholarships and student loans, or because of the prohibitive costs of college if students are classified as international students. The City University of New York (CUNY) is a model for ensuring access to higher education for all students, documented or undocumented. The Mayor will work with SUNY to create a mirror policy for City public school students and encourage additional out-of-state university systems to adopt policies that ensure that New York City students have access to college, irrespective of immigration status.

Launch ELL Task Force to identify obstacles to ELL student achievement and strategies to eliminate the achievement gap.

Although all immigrant children are not ELL's, improved progress of English Language Learners is a critical component of the City's Children First initiative and Mayor Bloomberg's

vision of a school system—and a City—that works for all New Yorkers. The New York City Department of Education has made significant inroads with improving ELL access and success in both English language development and core academics. Given what is known about former ELL's and their ability to outperform all other groups after reaching English proficiency, it is imperative to ensure that ELL's succeed and reach proficiency.

Mayor Bloomberg will convene a Mayoral Blue Ribbon Task Force to offer recommendations and guidance on how to improve the educational attainment of all ELL's. The Task Force will start by conducting an internal analysis of effective ELL programs to figure out how to bring those programs to scale in existing and new schools, especially new small schools. More broadly, the Task Force will inform policy, guide departmental priorities, help develop a set of guidance products for schools, as well as offer guidance on new, more responsive ELL data systems, school design, parental engagement strategies, and capacity development. The Task Force will be co-chaired by two national experts, one based locally, and will be composed of national and local ELL and school transformation experts in addition to local stakeholders.

Create the Office of Immigrant Affairs 2.0

Mayor Bloomberg will make sure that the Office of Immigrant Affairs is a powerful advocate within City Hall for immigration integration. The Mayor will strengthen the power of the office to convene agency heads and ensure that immigrants are integrated into their efforts, and create an Immigrant Advisory Board with members of the religious, labor, business, cultural, and community-based networks to meet quarterly. In addition, the Mayor will convene a summit of key stakeholders to work with the larger immigrant-serving community to better understand issues that impact immigrants, work towards viable solutions, and strengthen connections to City services and government.

Advocate for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level

The Mayor has been a fierce advocate for comprehensive immigration reform, complete with a path to citizenship. The Mayor will continue to stand up for immigrants and speak out in favor of a common-sense and compassionate immigration policy on both the local and national levels. He will continue to advocate for the enactment of the DREAM Act, and will support efforts to help undocumented immigrants build their records of good moral standing through a variety of actions, such as filing tax returns and greater civic involvement.