



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

## Bold New Campaign Demands Full Equality for Non-Citizens

GUSTAVO RIVERA June 26, 2014

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### **\*\*\*National Coalition Unveils “New York is Home” Legislation to Help Nearly 3 Million Noncitizen New Yorkers Become State Citizens, and Vows to Win State Citizenship for Immigrants in Other States\*\*\***

**New York, NY**— Seizing on Eric Cantor’s recent defeat in Congress and the uncertain future of immigration reform in Washington, a new national coalition, comprised of elected officials, advocates, experts, and concerned Americans, is moving quickly to refocus debate on what states can do to extend full equality to millions of noncitizen residents in the United States.

Their first goal is to pass the New York is Home Act, introduced today by State Senator Gustavo Rivera and Assembly Member Karim Camara, which would enable nearly 3 million noncitizens who meet specific criteria to apply for citizenship with New York’s Office for New Americans:

- 1) Proof of identity;
- 2) Proof of three years of New York State residency;
- 3) Proof of three years of New York State tax payments;

4) A commitment to abide by New York laws and uphold the State Constitution;

5) A willingness to serve on New York juries and to continue to pay state taxes.

Noncitizens granted New York state citizenship through this application process would be given access to: financial aid for higher education, health care, drivers' licenses, professional licenses, the right to vote, the right to run for office, and protection against racial profiling. New York is Home creates a new model of immigrant inclusion that other states will be urged to adopt.

Indeed, the legislative package goes further than what any other state in the country has done to enable the full and equal participation of immigrants in the communities where they live and work. It respects the federal government's authority over federal immigration, while asserting New York's authority to define its citizenry and to distribute the benefits of state citizenship.

"After years of frustration over inaction on immigration reform at the federal level, we aren't waiting for Washington any longer. This legislation and campaign reflect our shared values as New Yorkers and as Americans. Our state's hardworking non-citizens should have the opportunity to fully participate in the health and growth of our state. Now is the moment for all elected officials and leaders to support the New York is Home Act and the immigrant communities that have made New York their home," **said New York State Senator Gustavo Rivera, lead sponsor of the legislation.**

"State citizenship should recognize and reward the contributions of noncitizen residents who play by the rules while living and working here. Our shared future as New Yorkers and Americans depends on this legislation. We hope all our colleagues in government will join us in making New York a better and fairer home. The inclusion of immigrants in our economy and political system will help everyone, while their continued exclusion will harm us all," **said New York Assembly Member Karim Camara, Chair of the New York State Black, Latino, Puerto**

## **Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Caucus.**

“Immigrants make this state and country stronger, and deserve to be respected for our contributions. With state citizenship, we can exercise greater economic and political power and continue to help our communities, our New York, and our America grow and prosper. This is the only home many of us have ever known, and we demand to be counted and treated as full citizens,” **said Glenda Villamar, a noncitizen immigrant who lives in the New York City borough of Queens and is a member of Make the Road New York.**

“New York is Home recognizes and promotes the full equality and inclusion of all immigrant families in our democracy and our economy. Washington may be deadlocked, but the movement for immigrant dignity is gaining real traction in states, and what happens here in New York with this legislation will be watched around the country,” **said Andrew Friedman, Co-Executive Director of the Center for Popular Democracy, a national organization advocating for passage of the New York is Home Act and for similar legislation in several other states.**

"Ever since I arrived to the U.S at age 5, I knew New York was my home. Regardless of where I was born, I am a New Yorker. The state has seen me grow and embraced me. I hope now New York can finally fulfill my aspiration to be a lawyer so that I can give back and serve New York State and my community that has given me so much," **said Cesar Vargas, a national immigrant rights activist and lawyer.**

“Sadly, Washington has repeatedly demonstrated a clear lack of will to address the immigration crisis. Given this state’s proud history as being a welcoming beacon to immigrants, it only makes sense that New York is Home legislation makes the Empire State an example of what every state across the nation should model itself after,” **said Lucia Gomez, Executive Director of La Fuente, an immigrant advocacy organization.**

In the coming days, the coalition plans to announce other supporters of the legislation, and to pursue a series of actions designed to build support and momentum among elected

officials.

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