



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Senate Democrats Betray Law-Abiding Taxpayers By Approving Free College Tuition For Illegal Immigrants

JOHN J. FLANAGAN January 23, 2019

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Members of the Senate Republican Conference today criticized Democrats in the Senate and Assembly for passing the so-called “Dream Act,” which will reward law-breaking illegal immigrants with free college tuition. While doing so, Democrats in the Senate also blocked a Republican-sponsored amendment that would help provide additional financial aid to veterans and military heroes who have fought to protect our state and country, as well as loan forgiveness for recent college graduates who decide to work, live, and raise their families in New York.

“Too often debate about this legislation results in arguments about illegal immigration, but that is a complex issue for the federal government to handle. I believe everyone should have a fair shot at higher education as long as they put in the hard work needed to attain a college degree. We as state lawmakers should also be working to relieve these young people of their debts through ideas such as loan forgiveness. But this bill ultimately raises a question of fundamental fairness for all New Yorkers, and I wonder how we can turn our backs on those who pay their taxes and struggle with student debt every day,” said Senator Kenneth LaValle (1st Senate District), ranking member of the Senate Higher Education Committee.

“There’s no question that this bill will increase costs for New Yorkers – you’d have to be naïve or disingenuous to believe otherwise. And while millions of New Yorkers struggle with crushing student debt, I can only imagine their disbelief when they find out that their hard-earned tax dollars will be going towards the higher education costs for individuals knowingly breaking federal law. If there’s any group in this state or country that is worthy of state financial aid for a higher education, it’s our brave men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line every day for our freedoms,” said Senator Robert Ort (62nd Senate District), ranking member of the Senate Veterans, Homeland Security, and Military Affairs Committee.

The passage of this legislation (**S1250**) raises a basic issue of fairness for all New Yorkers, because when it comes to higher education funding, there are limited resources and prudent decisions to be made at all levels of state government. Under this legislation, free college tuition would be rewarded to illegal immigrants, totaling \$27 million or more annually.

Nearly three million New Yorkers are currently drowning in student debt that totals more than \$86 billion, according to a [recent news report](#). The nationwide figure totals \$1.5 trillion, with 8.5 million borrowers in default, unable to make any payments on their debt. According to the New York State comptroller, the average student loan debt in New York is a whopping

\$32,200.

Receiving state-provided financial aid is one of the most important ways for struggling middle-class families to help offset these burdensome costs. By promising to provide a significant slice of state financial aid to illegal immigrants, Democrats are turning their backs on middle-class families. By rejecting sensible amendments to provide additional financial aid for veterans and loan forgiveness for those raising their families in New York, Senate Democrats are betraying the trust of every law-abiding, taxpaying New Yorker.

Senate Republicans also made clear that they oppose any tuition increases at SUNY and CUNY institutions, as SUNY and CUNY students in districts throughout the state will be among those most negatively affected by this reckless Democrat-sponsored legislation.