



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## O'Mara, colleagues renew opposition to 'Green Light Law' granting driver's licenses to illegal immigrants: Call the law a threat to public safety and security locally, statewide and nationally

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 24, 2020

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**Albany, N.Y., February 24**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) and other Republican state legislators today joined Congressman Tom Reed to call on Governor Andrew Cuomo

and the Democrat majorities of the State Legislature to rescind the state's newly enacted "Green Light Law" granting driver's licenses to illegal immigrants.

The law was approved last June and took effect in December. Cuomo made the law's enactment (S1747/A3675, Chapter 37 of the Laws of 2019) a top priority. Among numerous concerns, O'Mara and other opponents have argued that county clerks and employees at local Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMV) are unable to verify the authenticity of foreign IDs. The New York Association of County Clerks opposed the action and several county clerks have unsuccessfully challenged the law in court.

Only twelve states allow illegal immigrants to obtain a driver's license and, except for New York, all of those states allow federal agencies including U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) full access to their state DMV records.

O'Mara, who has joined law enforcement and local and state government colleagues opposing the action, once again blasted the approval of the law allowing driver's licenses to illegal immigrants as reckless and the product of one-party, radically progressive, Democrat control of state government.

"Governor Cuomo and the Legislature's Democrats are behind the wheel, recklessly speeding this state down a radical, irresponsible road as a high taxing, big spending haven for lawbreakers. Welcome to one-party control," said O'Mara. "Lawbreaking illegal immigrants should never be rewarded with a government-issued driver's license. It puts public safety and security at risk, imposes another unfunded mandate on counties, and asks local, law-abiding public servants to break the law. My bottom line is straightforward: What's best for public safety? For this governor and this Legislature to have public safety keep taking a back seat to ideology or short-term political gain is wrong, it's irresponsible, it's dangerous, and it

puts all of us at risk. Law and order matters.”

O’Mara and every Republican member of the Legislature voted against the move and continue to point to it as a significant threat to public safety in New York State and across the nation.

The law has recently come under fire for a provision that prohibits the New York State DMV from sharing information with any agency that enforces immigration law, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This has led to the CBP discontinuing the eligibility of New Yorkers to enroll in various trusted traveler programs that facilitate border entry for frequent international travelers.

Reed brought DHS officials to Albany today to brief state lawmakers on the implications of New York’s ban on information sharing.

A joint statement two weeks ago from New York State’s four U.S. Attorneys noted that this provision of the law has “a much broader adverse effect on law enforcement and public safety...Restoring collaboration and information sharing furthers our effort to secure justice for all, preserve public safety, protect individual rights, and promote due process, bringing us ever closer to a sanctuary built on the rule of law and fairness for everyone.”

The DHS and other federal law enforcement agencies regularly rely on state-level DMV information to protect public safety and combat serious crime including drug trafficking, murder, sexual assault, cybercrime, human trafficking, child exploitation, and other serious and violent crimes.

In a strongly worded statement, the State Sheriff’s Association also criticized New York’s move to block information sharing, “We feel compelled to express our opposition and deep concern...Our inability, under the new law, to share DMV data with federal immigration

officers jeopardizes the safety of those officers. We find it offensive that, in order to avail our own Deputies of DMV data that they need for their own safe operations, we were coerced into signing a non-disclosure agreement which jeopardizes the safety of our federal partners.”

This law is a huge YELLOW caution light to border and immigration law enforcement. It puts agents on high alert every time a New York registered vehicle approaches a border crossing or a traveler presents a New York driver’s license. The law is a RED light to all frequent international travelers for business or pleasure, and international commerce being conducted by New York trucking companies.