O'Mara, Senate colleagues move to STOP 'Green Light Law': Republican amendment to repeal the law defeated along party lines

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Albany, N.Y., February 25—A day after being briefed by officials from the federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on the dangers of New York State's so-called "Green Light" law

granting driver's licenses to illegal immigrants, State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) and his Senate GOP colleagues today maneuvered to repeal the new law.

Senate Republicans forced the full Senate to vote on a repeal amendment during this afternoon's legislative session. The amendment, which O'Mara co-sponsored, was defeated along party lines with Republican Senators voting in favor of repeal and Democratic Senators opposed.

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

"We need to put a stop to a law that is endangering the safety and security of this state and our nation. Governor Cuomo and the one-party, Democrat-controlled Legislature are telling federal law enforcement officers working in the best interests of national security to get lost. That's dangerous, it's radical, it's irresponsible, and it needs to stop. Law and order matters," said O'Mara, the top Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

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. O'Mara and every Republican member of the Legislature voted against the move when it was approved by the Legislature and have continued to highlight it as a significant threat to public safety statewide and nationally.

Only 14 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.

U.S. Congressman Tom Reed brought DHS officials to Albany yesterday 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 the provision of New York's law prohibiting widely accepted information sharing has a broad "adverse effect on law enforcement and public safety." They stressed that 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."