

GREEN LIGHT NY: Driving Together

Know the Facts



Know the facts about expanding access to the Standard Driver's License in NY.

RECOMMENDATION

New York State should restore equal access to driver's licenses by passing legislation to expand access to the "Standard License." This legislation, [S01747/A03675](#), would establish that the newly created "Standard License" be accessible to all state residents, regardless of immigration status.

FACT: Expanding licenses would be an economic boom to the State.

Expanding access to the standard driver's license will **generate millions of dollars annually for New York and save motorists money**. The fees required to apply for the new license will more than cover any related costs. A [2017 analysis](#) by the Fiscal Policy Institute determined that New York State and County governments would receive an **estimated \$57 million in combined annual revenue, and \$26 million in one-time revenue through taxes and fees**. In addition, licensing undocumented immigrant drivers will help **lower insurance premiums for all drivers**, by a moderate average of \$17 dollars a year, which collectively saves motorists millions of dollars annually. Furthermore, New York State's **economy will receive a boost** as thousands of people purchase cars and workers overcome barriers to transportation that prevent them from reaching improved job options and increase their discretionary income.

FACT: Expanding licenses would make New Yorkers safer.

Expanding access to the standard driver's license to undocumented immigrant drivers is a practical way to improve public safety and strengthen trust between immigrant communities and police. They ensure **all drivers can be properly licensed, informed of traffic laws, and operate a registered, inspected and insured vehicle**. Since New Mexico changed its policy in 2003, their rate of uninsured drivers fell from 33% to less than 9%. With **valid, legal identification**, police will be able to **verify the identity of motorists and review their traffic records** in the DMV system, allowing them to fulfill their duties more efficiently and effectively. Witnesses and victims of crimes will **more readily seek out and cooperate with police**. A Standard License is **not valid for federal identification purposes and cannot be used to board an airplane or enter federal buildings**.

FACT: The Standard License is clearly marked "NOT FOR FEDERAL PURPOSES."

U.S. citizenship is required to register to vote in New York State. Possession of **a standard license cannot be legally used as evidence of a holder's immigration or citizenship status**; it will not automatically register anyone to vote, **nor is it valid for any other federal purposes**. Furthermore, States that currently provide standard licenses to undocumented immigrants have shown no evidence of increased voter fraud. According to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University of Law, "*examination after examination of voter fraud claims reveal that voter fraud is very rare, voter impersonation is nearly non-existent,*" and a comprehensive study found only 31 credible allegations in the more than one billion votes cast between 2000-2014.

FACT: Expanding Licenses would further integrate immigrant New Yorkers.

Only the federal government can determine immigration laws and eligibility to adjust status. Unfortunately, most undocumented immigrants have **no options to "fix" their status** until Congress and the President agree to fix the system. Standard driver's licenses are not valid for federal purposes. They simply authorize people to drive and carry a valid ID for non-federal purposes. Their greatest benefit is the potential to **prevent a simple traffic infraction from resulting in arrest and tragic deportation**. Undocumented immigrants, who must drive to reach work, worship, or school can do so with less risk, which will allow them to **participate and contribute more fully to local community life**. In addition, State issued identification will allow unbanked immigrant New Yorkers **more opportunity to financially integrate into the formal banking system** and build their family's savings and economic security.

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FACT: New York can be REAL ID compliant and provide licenses to all New Yorkers.

The 2005 REAL ID Act allows for states to **develop a multi-tier driver's license system and be in compliance**. New York DMV has released its plan to be REAL ID compliant that includes a three tier system. The first is an enhanced license, second a REAL ID compliant license and the third a standard license not for federal purposes. The Green Light legislation would make the third tier, the Standard License, accessible to New Yorkers regardless of immigration status. **Many States have successfully implemented this system**, including Vermont, Connecticut, and Washington, DC.

FACT: Expanding Licenses allows New York to address the needs of New Yorkers.

In areas of New York without public transportation, **driving is a necessity, not a privilege**. Most undocumented immigrants would like to comply with federal immigration law but **there is no legal option available to them to adjust their status** until Congressional reform is implemented. Undocumented immigrants contribute to all facets of New York life both socially and economically. **They pay over \$1.1 billion in state and local taxes annually and are responsible for \$40 billion of New York's economic output**, according to the Fiscal Policy Institute. Granting access to **standard driver's licenses offer a practical solution** that allows undocumented immigrants to comply with State law while the nation waits for reasonable and just federal immigration reform.

FACT: Expanding drivers licenses would not put immigrant New Yorkers at risk.

Expanding access to the standard driver's license will be accessible to all State residents of New York, regardless of immigration status. The law would **expressly prohibit discrimination** against a holder and **possession may not be used as evidence of citizenship or immigration status**. The legislation incorporates privacy protections to limit unfettered data searches by federal government. Specifically, documents used to determine eligibility will not be retained, immigration status will not be recorded, information collected will be maintained in the same database as the enhanced driver's license and **will not be public record, and data requests will require individual consent or a judicial warrant before disclosure**. Furthermore, if a request for data is made in bad faith the Commissioner can deny it. The standard's license can prevent a simple traffic infraction from resulting in arrest and deportation.

For general information and to be connected with an organization leading the campaign in your region contact:

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