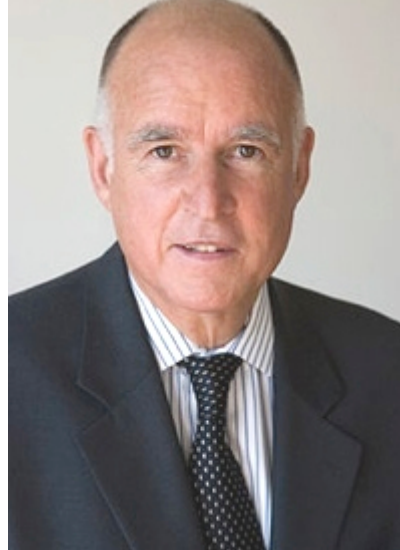




Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 13, 2011

Calif. Govt Considers Controversial School Aid Bill for Illegals

During last night's debate, frontrunner Rick Perry provoked boos from the audience when he defended his decision to allow illegal immigrants to receive in-state tuition benefits if they were residents of Texas for more than three years. It seems California's governor, Jerry Brown (left) is taking those efforts a step further in his own state as he considers signing a bill that would allow illegal immigrants to receive financial aid to state colleges and universities.



Mondaq.com [reports](#):

The California DREAM Act (AB 130), makes undocumented immigrant college students eligible for previously unavailable privately funded scholarships for attendance at community colleges, state colleges, and public universities in California.. AB 130 passed through the California Senate in mid-July, and was favored as it would not cost taxpayers anything. The passage of AB 130 was a major victory for immigrants, as previous versions of the California DREAM Act were approved three times before by the state legislature, but then vetoed by former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger each time.

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In order to ensure passage, Assemblyman Gil Cedillo split the legislation into two bills, known as AB 130 and AB 131. Governor Jerry Brown already signed first bill, but the second bill is where much of the controversy lies, as it would permit undocumented students access to state financial aid and allow the same students to qualify for Board of Governors fee waivers at community colleges, and permit them eligibility for university grants.

The state of California already grants illegal immigrants access to in-state tuition benefits and allows them to accept privately funded college grants. The newest legislation passed the California Legislature on September 2, and grants about \$40 million in financial aid and fee waivers to illegal immigrants.

USA Today [reports](#) on the move:



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As states such as Arizona, Alabama, Georgia and [South Carolina](#) push hard stances against illegal immigrants, the turnaround in the [Golden State](#) is viewed as either a Democratic-controlled Legislature ignoring the will of Californians, or a path that other states will soon be following.

According to California Republican Assemblyman Tim Donnelly, however, the legislation is in opposition to the sentiments of Californians. Pointing to Proposition 187 — the voter referendum that cut benefits to illegal immigrants in 1994 which passed with 59 percent of the vote — Donnelly contends that voters' views on the subject have changed minimally.

However, according to a University of Southern California Dornsife College/Los Angeles Times poll taken last year, for the first time, more Californians are opposed to a new version of that proposition.

Dan Schnur of the Unruh Institute of Politics at USC contends that the poll is a reflection of the increased presence of Hispanics entering the state as well as an increase in non-Hispanics leaving the state in recent decades.

“Because younger Californians are growing up in multiethnic, multicultural society, they're must less likely to draw these types of distinctions than older voters,” Schnur explains. Skrentny also contends that Schnur's assertion explains why states in the north and east are just recently starting their anti-immigration battles.

For example, Georgia recently passed an anti-immigration law this year that has already been blocked by a federal judge after it saw an increase in its Hispanic population between 2000 and 2010. Similarly, South Carolina's 148 percent increase in Hispanic population is what likely provoked it to pass an anti-immigration law that is currently being challenged in federal court. After Indiana witnessed nearly 200,000 additional Hispanics enter the state over the course of the last decade, it passed an anti-immigration law that is also being held up by a federal judge.

Skrentny notes these examples and suggests, “These are folks that are not used to this kind of ethnic diversity. That suggests that places like Alabama and Georgia are closer to where California was in the 1990s, and it suggests that California has moved on.”

Skrentny's assertions seem to overlook a number of other concerns raised by the states, however. “Why is an illegal's dream more important than an American's dream?” asked Donnelly. “There's a tsunami of discontent with this bill. Outrage isn't even a strong enough word.”

Donnelly has already indicated that if Governor Brown in fact signs the immigrant financial aid bill, he will push for another voter referendum to overturn it.

Likewise, Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies argues that the timing of the bill is poor, considering California's current financial crisis.

“With a state that's billions of dollars in the red-our own version of Greece in the United States-the idea of giving additional taxpayer money to illegal immigrants is surreal,” said Krikorian. “It's unreal.”

Analysts are now reporting that California's endeavor exemplifies a growing trend to accept illegal immigrants as they spread out and establish families.

“It appears that you get the most anti-immigration sentiment where immigrant populations are newer and where they are growing and when there's a climate where political leaders are drawing attention to this,” said John Skrentny, director of the Center for Comparative Immigration Studies at the University of California-San Diego.



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Meanwhile, students in California are [rallying](#) to demand Governor Brown sign the controversial measure. Student leaders in California submitted nearly 12,000 postcards to the Governor's office, all of which urge Brown to sign the bill.



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