



The New York Immigration Coalition

PRESS RELEASE

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Norman Eng
212-627-2227 x235

On Governor Paterson's Appointment of Representative Kirsten Gillibrand to U.S. Senate

*Statement of Ms. Chung-Wha Hong, Executive Director, New York
Immigration Coalition:*

Today, Governor David Paterson announced the appointment of Representative Kirsten Gillibrand to the U.S. Senate seat representing the State of New York. Representative Gillibrand will move from representing the 20th Congressional District to representing, in its entirety, one of the most diverse states in the nation, where more than one in five residents is an immigrant.

Now that she will be representing a far broader and more diverse constituency, Senator Gillibrand must reconsider her positions on immigration.

During her tenure in the House, then-Representative Gillibrand took positions on immigration that are deeply troubling, to say the least. She sponsored legislation that sought to require local police officers to take on immigration enforcement duties, even though police chiefs have testified it would impair their ability to protect the public. She strongly supported throwing more resources toward ineffective border enforcement, but appeared to oppose any path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants. Simply put, these are positions that put her at odds with the majority of New Yorkers, whose values reflect our state's history of welcoming immigrants, as well as with President Barack Obama, who supports a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

At a time when Congress has a clear mandate to fix our broken immigration system, we don't need rhetoric that divides us, pitting immigrant workers against native-born workers; we need solutions that bring us together and make America stronger. We hope that in her new position representing the state as a whole, Senator Gillibrand will be a strong advocate for just and humane immigration reform, devising a practical and realistic solution to bringing undocumented immigrants into the system and reforming our immigration system so that it is fairer to all.

Her predecessor, former Senator Hillary Clinton, understood that the status quo—with an estimated one million undocumented New Yorkers living in the shadows, in fear, and often subject to exploitation—is unacceptable. We call on Senator Gillibrand to form a strong partnership with immigrant communities and fight for fairer immigration policies, so that families need not endure endless separations, and so that immigrant workers who risk everything in order to make a better life for their families are recognized for their inherent dignity and for their contributions to the U.S. economy.

The New York Immigration Coalition is a policy advocacy group that brings together more than 200 member organizations in New York State to fight for justice and opportunity for immigrants.

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