

This is a printer friendly version of an article from the **Daily Record**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

08/7/07 - Posted from the Daily Record newsroom

Corzine forms panel to review immigration policy

Blue Ribbon Advisory board has 15 months to outline help for state's foreign-born

**BY MICHAEL RISPOLI
GANNETT STATE BUREAU**

JERSEY CITY -- Taking on the hot-button issue of immigration, Gov. Jon S. Corzine signed an executive order Monday establishing a panel that will recommend ways the state can better integrate the foreign-born into New Jersey's society.

The Blue Ribbon Advisory Panel on Immigration Policy, set to begin meeting in the early fall, will examine ways to help the immigrant community in the areas of education, health care, housing, employment, and language proficiency. The panel will have 15 months to report its findings to the governor.

Corzine said immigrants are being "marginalized" because "we look at them as outsiders." Corzine went on to say the inclusion of immigrants is "fundamental."

"We are not setting national policy on how immigration will occur or how our borders are enforced, but we have a responsibility to look after the human rights and civil rights of each and every immigrant," said Corzine.

Though Corzine said all avenues to improve inclusion would be looked into, the governor told reporters after the formal event that one possible outcome could be the creation of a permanent state office dedicated solely to handling immigration affairs.

Morristown rallies

The issues of illegal immigration and immigrant rights have come to the forefront in the past few weeks in New Jersey. In late July, an estimated 500 people on both sides of the debate formed protests in Morristown, where Mayor Donald Cresitello wants to see the local police deputized as federal immigration officials. Five people were arrested at the rallies, and two people were slightly injured.

In July, a Monmouth University/Gannett New Jersey Poll found New Jersey residents divided over immigration. Some 40 percent of those surveyed said the immigration impact was good for the state, while 44 percent said it was bad. Fourteen percent said it had both positive and negative impacts or were unsure of its impacts.

A majority of those polled -- 65 percent -- said illegal immigrants who have worked in the country for at least two years should be given a path toward citizenship.

Those strongly opposed to illegal immigration are criticizing Corzine's new panel because it looks to offer better services to those here illegally and does not attempt to solve the contentious issue.

Assemblyman Christopher J. Connors, R-Ocean, said stemming the problem of illegal immigration should be addressed first, not "a panel that is essentially being established to pave the way for a better life for illegal immigrants."

"When we do come across illegal immigration, nothing is being done. Nothing is being done to those hire them, and nothing is being done to secure our borders from preventing it from occurring. That is where our energies and our concentration should be," said Connors.

Heading the 27-person panel will be will be state Public Advocate Ronald Chen, a child of Chinese immigrants. Chen said immigration reform has to not only come from the federal level, but locally as well.

"On the state level, we should work toward developing policies and programs that encourage our newest residents to integrate into our communities," said Chen.
