



Musgrave conducts hearing in Greeley In-state tuition for illegal immigrants dominates debate

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By JASON KOSENA*

The national debate on offering in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants swept through Greeley on Friday morning when Rep. Marilyn Musgrave hosted a congressional field hearing of the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workplace to hear testimony about immigration issues.

Much of the debate centered on the DREAM Act, which if passed would allow states to determine if they want to offer in-state tuition rates to undocumented immigrants.

Ten states currently have laws that allow similar provisions, including immigrant-heavy California and Texas.

Musgrave said she doesn't believe taxpayers should have to shoulder the debts of illegal immigrants.

"I oppose any proposal that would allow in-state tuition for illegal aliens," Musgrave said. "Taxpayers should not have to finance the education of illegal aliens."

Among the witnesses asked to testify were Colorado Rep. Cory Gardner and state board of education member Jared Polis.

Gardner told committee members that allowing undocumented immigrants access to in-state tuition rates at colleges and universities would invite undocumented immigrants to Colorado.

Gardner also testified that Colorado has the sixth highest percentage of illegal immigrants in the nation and that the costs associated with them are high.

"We must stem the tide of illegal immigrants coming into this state," Gardner said. "We cannot, as a state or a nation, give benefits to those who are here illegally, above and beyond the services and benefits that we are willing to offer every person lawfully present in the United States."

Polis, elected to the at-large state board of education seat, and a founder of two charter schools in Colorado aimed at helping Spanish-language learners, testified in favor of the passage of the DREAM Act and to providing in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants who have lived in Colorado and graduated from a high school in the state.

"I am here today to strongly urge the United States Congress to pass the DREAM Act," Polis said. "The act would help (illegal immigrants) complete their education, provide them with a path to citizenship and improve our state's competitiveness."

Musgrave, who is running against state Rep. Angie Paccione for re-election to the 4th Congressional District seat, was also in Loveland on Friday for a panel discussion with local business leaders.

Paccione, who favors offering in-state tuition to undocumented immigrants under the age of 18, said politicians cannot hold minors accountable for their parents' illegal status.

"I have a fundamental principle that we can't hold children responsible for the actions of their parents," Paccione said, adding that her record indicates she is not lax on immigration issues. "I helped to pass the

toughest immigration laws in the country (during the last special session). This isn't about illegal immigration, this is about not holding children responsible for the actions of their parents."

Source:

<http://www.coloradoan.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060902/NEWS01/609020334&SearchID=73255768267119>