

No in-state tuition rates for illegal immigrants

By MICHAEL SYMONS • GANNETT STATE BUREAU • January 11, 2010

TRENTON — Lawmakers shelved plans to vote Monday on a proposal allowing immigrant children not in the country legally to pay in-state tuition rates at New Jersey public colleges.

Because Monday's meetings of the Senate and Assembly were the last before the legislative session expires Tuesday at noon, the bill dies. It didn't have the votes needed to pass, at least in the Senate, according to two lawmakers.

The Senate has postponed a vote last Thursday, telegraphing the bill's uncertain prospects.

Gov.-elect Chris Christie who takes office in a week, has criticized the bill, suggesting that it's unlikely to be revived before 2014.

Under the bill, students who are undocumented aliens would be eligible to pay in-state tuition if they attended a New Jersey high school for at least three years, graduated or got the equivalent of a diploma and file an affidavit with their college promising to apply to legalize their immigration status as soon as they're eligible.

New Jersey would have become the 12th state to exempt undocumented immigrants from paying out-of-state tuition rates.

Supporters of the bill say it's fair to charge in-state tuition rates to children raised in the state who have had academic success and shouldn't be punished because their parents brought them here improperly.

Opponents say public colleges and, by extension, taxpayers can't afford to pay for such a benefit. Some have questioned whether colleges would raise tuition to cover the lost revenue or steer more admissions to out-of-state students.

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