

## Legislation Proposed in Illinois to Allow Illegal Immigrants to Receive Student Loans

By Brooke Heath

Recently, Illinois Senator Martin Sandoval (D-Chicago) proposed a law that would make any Illinois resident with a 3.0 grade point average eligible to receive state-backed student loans, even if he or she is an illegal immigrant. If passed, this controversial bill would allow any Illinois student seeking financial aid to be eligible for \$5,000 per year to pay for his or her higher education, regardless of citizenship status.

According to Higher Education Washington, Inc.'s *NewsLine*, in addition to having a "B" average to qualify for financial aid, students must also have lived in the state for a minimum of three years and graduated from an Illinois high school. The bill also requires that any student who is not a U.S. citizen or permanent resident sign an affidavit stating that he or she will apply for permanent residency as soon as he or she is eligible.

Sandoval stated, "Whether you're a citizen or a permanent legal resident or an immigrant, you...should have a right to an education."

According to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, this bill was one vote short of passing, but because of a parliamentary move, it was kept alive.

But many are against this legislation. Senator Bradley Burzynski (R-Clare), who voted against the bill, said, "This program...would provide loans to illegal immigrants. Not to immigrants—to *illegal* immigrants."

He continued by stating that he would not support legislation that provided more services to illegal immigrants. "The state of Illinois can only provide so much," Burzynski said.

Still, Senator Sandoval supports this legislation because it will provide low-cost loans to high-achieving students. However, according to the *Sun-Times*, Sandoval could not estimate how much students who receive the state-backed loans would save in comparison to what they would save with other loans.

Senator Sandoval said, "Shame on my colleagues who threw the immigration red herring out. That is not what this bill is about."