

Act against Real ID, Hil & Chuck



**ALBOR
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WHERE ARE Hillary Clinton and Chuck Schumer? That is the question that immigrants, their advocates and every sensible New Yorker has been asking for the last couple of months.

Where are our two distinguished New York senators hiding, now that the U.S. Senate is about to vote on the Real ID Act — a rabid attack on immigration dressed up as an anti-terrorism measure?

Not a peep has been heard from Clinton or Schumer about such a critical issue, although both, of course, were elected to represent the interests and protect the rights of all New Yorkers, including the more than 40% of city residents born in foreign countries.

“Do they even remember they are from New York?” asked Aarti Shahani of Families for Freedom, a multiethnic defense network by and for immigrants facing and fighting deportation. “I have no hope for politicians — I don’t expect anything from them anymore.”

Not many people do. Both Clinton, who never answered our calls, and Schumer, whose office promised to get back to us and never did, seem to care more about not jeopardizing their political careers than about doing right for their constituents.

Yet they would do well to remember that one of every three voters in New York is an immigrant. And that the senators’ silence will not be easily forgotten.

As Shahani said, “Their hands should be held to the fire. I mean, this is an immigrant state.”

The senators cannot afford the luxury of non-commitment when the future of hundreds of thousands of their constituents are at stake.

“In the name of national security,” Shahani said, “Real ID would strip immigrants of driver’s licenses; end the constitutional right to *habeas corpus* for the first time since the Civil War; empower private police forces to enforce immigration laws, prevent people fleeing persecution from gaining asylum here and almost certainly increase deaths at the border.” Police state, anyone?

Because the Draconian anti-immigrant provisions were attached to an emergency spending bill to provide \$81 billion for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, chances are the Senate will approve them in the next couple of weeks.

Yet hard as you try to find them, Clinton and Schumer are nowhere to be seen.

“They are posturing to the right,” said Ana María Archila, executive director of the Queens Latin American Integration Center. “Their lack of commitment is irresponsible. This is a law not only against immigrants, but against privacy rights and basic individual freedoms that are so fundamental in this country.”

On April 14, the New York Immigration Coalition, an umbrella organization for 150 groups that work with immigrants and refugees, sent a letter to Clinton and Schumer urging them “to take a strong public position against the REAL ID Act and to do everything you can to stop this anti-immigrant proposal from passing in Congress.”

“Simply put,” the letter read, “the REAL ID Act is blatantly anti-immigrant legislation masquerading as a national security initiative.”

And it added: “The REAL ID wrongly claims to make us safer when all it really does is unfairly scapegoat immigrants who make tremendous contributions to our communities, our economy and our nation.”

But to no avail. Our senators, who should know better, chose to relinquish their duty and remain in hiding.

In the meantime, millions of hardworking immigrants and their families are being deprived of their basic rights in the name of national security.

And puzzled New Yorkers keep asking, “Where are Hillary Clinton and Charles Schumer?”

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