

## GOV'S NOT DRIVING ALONE

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### **Body**

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IN UTAH, 35,000 undocumented immigrants have "privilege cards" that let them drive legally - and the state says it works.

Republican-led Beehive State officials call their two-tier program a success, and immigrant advocates who fought the plan now accept it.

Gov. Spitzer's plan to let illegal immigrants get licenses set off the most furious policy debate of his administration.

But Spitzer certainly didn't invent the idea of letting undocumented immigrants drive legally: Before former Gov. George Pataki changed the rules, New York regularly granted licenses regardless of immigration status. Even in post-9/11 America, other states still do.

Some have dropped or reconsidered their programs because of fraud. Others claim success.

Conservative Utah - with its Republican governor and legislature - offers both a full-fledged driver's license and a separate, clearly marked "driver privilege card" for noncitizens.

It is an idea state officials said they got from Tennessee. And while the plan fell apart there, Utah Driver License Bureau chief Wallace Wintle calls his state's setup "a pretty good compromise."

"On the one side, you have those who are arguing, 'They're here illegally and they shouldn't be given any privileges whatsoever - and it's a security issue nationwide,' " he said.

"The other side says, 'Yes, they are here illegally, but they add such a vital contribution to the economy, how can we not let them continue that? It only allows them to drive so they can get to their job.' "

Leo Bravo, director of the Multicultural Center of Cache Valley in northern Utah, which mainly serves Mexicans, Salvadorans and Guatemalans, initially objected when the program began in 2005, fearing that drivers with a big, red "P" on their cards would be mistreated by authorities.

But that didn't happen: "So far, it's working good," Bravo said, although he added that immigrants pay more because their cards must be renewed annually.

Advocacy groups such as the New York Immigration Coalition reject tiered systems, saying they don't improve security and leave immigrants "vulnerable to racial profiling, discrimination and possibly deportation."

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Like Bravo, Georgina Coon of the Latino advocacy group Raz-PAC in southern Utah, also fought the idea at first.

Now, "It's working, because a person that has a privilege card [is] legally driving. But yes, it does single people out," Coon said.

Democratic Gov. Bill Richardson's border state of New Mexico issues a single license to citizens and undocumented immigrants. It accepts as proof documents issued by the Mexican government.

Abuses brought down licensing programs in other states, notably North Carolina and Tennessee.

In Tennessee, DMV workers peddled illicit documents and opportunists bused illegal immigrants in - for a hefty fee - to get licenses. Those problems, and political pressures, led the state last year to stop issuing the licenses. [ckatz@nydailynews.com](mailto:ckatz@nydailynews.com)

## Graphic

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The state of New Mexico offers a single driver's license to both citizens and undocumented aliens.

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