

The New York Community Media Alliance (NYCMA)

NYCMA meets with Governor Eliot Spitzer

The New York Community Media Alliance (NYCMA) works with the ethnic and community media in New York City and the metropolitan area to advocate for access to information, transparency and accountability from city and state government. As well, our programs help strengthen investigative reporting skills, business strategies and to draw resources to help the publications' bottom line. The fall of 2007 has produced exciting results. Events included the 6th Ippies Journalism Awards, held on October 26. The event, which honors excellence in reporting done in this media sector, was a great success drawing close to 20 percent more attendees. In September 14, a half-day conference of editorial and business workshops for our members also drew strong participation.

But perhaps a good indicator that our hard work is paying off was a meeting with Governor Spitzer. On October 31, the communications director at the Governor's office reached out to NYCMA to request we gather the city's immigrant and community press. The Governor's controversial plan to give driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants, the details of which had been carefully crafted with several immigrant rights organizations, was made public with revisions that sparked heated public policy debates and much discontent in immigrant communities. On November 2, over 40 journalists from different ethnic communities -- Latino, Polish, Bangla, Chinese, Pakistani, Filipino, African, Indian, Korean, Caribbean and Russian -- met with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor David Paterson. The meeting served to shed light on the political pressures faced by Spitzer and Patterson, and for the journalists to ask pointed questions of them, primarily on issues surrounding the safety of immigrants who would "come out of the shadows" to avail themselves of a driver's license, given the anti-immigrant sentiment seen around the country.

NYCMA member reporters thanked us for the opportunity to speak directly with Spitzer and Patterson and get their questions answered so they could report accurately to their readers the implications of the proposed legislation. The work of making such encounters happen is made possible with support from foundations such as Overbrook, which understand the importance of encouraging a media sector that reaches over 3.5 million readers in New York City not reached by mainstream media; of these, according the Mayor's Office on Immigrant Affairs, 1.8 have little or no English-language skills.

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