



**CITY OF NEW HAVEN  
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**NEW HAVEN** IT ALL HAPPENS HERE

Mayor John DeStefano, Jr.    [www.infonewhaven.com](http://www.infonewhaven.com)

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Statement of Mayor John DeStefano, Jr. to Board Of Aldermen Finance  
Committee on Municipal Identification Program

Good evening Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

My name is John DeStefano and I live at 150 Judwin Avenue in the city of New Haven. I am also mayor of the city of New Haven. I have held that position for 14 years and over that time, I have only testified at an aldermanic meeting on 3 prior occasions.

I thought the committee's work tonight sufficiently important to make this brief 4<sup>th</sup> appearance, in 14 years.

Following me tonight, any number of city staff, city residents and advocates will appear before you. They will speak to the implementation of a municipal ID card here in new haven.

Their remarks will touch on the fact that this is an opportunity that will benefit all segments of our community: students, elderly, undocumented, under-banked and children.

- They will identify how the debit component of the card will support wealth creation;

- How the card will assist in the public's access to city services such as libraries, parks and all manner of public information; and
- They will discuss and point out how a common and more broadly utilized municipal id will assist the police and ensure greater public safety for all our residents.

Now these points are all critical, all on target, and all on their own terms sufficient to merit your adoption of the matter before you tonight.

However i wish to suggest still another reason for your favorable consideration of this matter tonight.

You see this matter is also about us. Us: Who we are as a city. How we as individuals have come to earn many of the blessings we enjoy in our lives. How we are going to solve many of the challenges before us as a community living here in new haven.

I strongly believe that each person's hope to enjoy the full blessings of freedom, of individual choice, to educate ourselves and our children, to aspire and to be inspired is built on a foundation. A foundation that values the worth of each one of us. And, a foundation that is cemented upon mutual action and purpose.

Thousands of years ago Aristotle said that "men come together in cities in order to live, but they remain together in order to live the good life."

It is only through the recognition of the value and worth of each among us, that we are able to employ the skills, the strengths and vision of an entire community to the benefit of the individual. "Men come together in cities in order to live, but they remain together in order to live the good life."

Living among us today – silently, almost invisibly - are some 12 million men, women and children. They do not dream different things for themselves and their families. They do not hope for futures less full of possibility for their children. They do not worship a different god. The sweat of their work is no different from yours or mine. And they would not be here but for the complicit permission of the national government.

Like the rest of us – they are not here by accident.

So tonight we have a chance to end the silent complicity in our nation – by taking action, together, here in new haven -- in this aldermanic chamber on this day - May 17, 2007.

We can do that by way of a fundamental acknowledgement of an individual's worth and dignity – by giving a name to those among us. Not to name them by a stereotype, or by an ignorance, or by a prejudice.

Rather – to call our neighbor by their own name. Now many of those names are **Latino**. But this is not a **Latino** issue. This is not an immigrant issue. This is an issue of justice and human rights. **And as was the case with the Amistad** if we in new haven do not stand up – who will? This is a new haven issue.

Success in a competitive international economy, in keeping our kids safe, in being the best that we can be, will demand all our talents. How can we call upon each other to accomplish difficult things, when too many among us are not allowed to carry their own names?

And though their names may be different than those found on the portraits hanging in this hall it is good to remember that 100 years ago:

- 1/3 of the city's population was foreign born;
- Another 1/2 of the population had at least 1 foreign born parent;
- In 4 of the city's 15 wards, 2 out of every 3 people were immigrants; and
- In 14 of the 15 wards, one half of the population was made up of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Americans.

We became better for it then. And we can trust that we shall again – by calling upon one another – by name.

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