

## Support for DREAM Act Strengthens in California

By Amit Agarwal

Students from across California accompanied by immigrants' rights activists gathered at San Francisco's Civic Center to show their support for the DREAM Act. The students, who went on a week-long fast, came from such far-flung areas as Orange County, Los Angeles County, the Central Valley, and San Jose.

The nation provides undocumented students access to public education at K-12 schools. After completing high school successfully, some wish to acquire college educations. However, when they apply for state or federal financial aid, authorities turn them away. Under current law, undocumented students admitted to colleges in the U.S. are denied financial aid for higher education. These students may include bright and talented individuals who have the potential to become lawyers, teachers, doctors, or other in-demand professionals. The passage of the DREAM Act would provide benefits to such students, who, although they were brought up in the U.S., do not have the benefits of citizenship. Many of these students were brought by their parents illegally into the United States as children.

If the DREAM Act becomes law, approximately 65,000 immigrants who graduate from high school each year will be eligible for legal residency. The eligibility requirements laid out by the act are as follows:

- The student must have entered the United States before turning 16.
- The student should have stayed in the country for at least five years prior to the date of enactment.
- The student needs to have graduated from a U.S. high school or obtained a GED.
- The student must demonstrate "good moral character." (He or she cannot have a criminal record or a history of drug charges.)

Eligible students would be granted six-year temporary "conditional status," which would allow them get driver's licenses, attend college as in-state residents, and acquire Social Security numbers. To qualify for green cards, students must have either attended college or served in the military for at least two years during their six-year provisional terms.