

9/11 Families for a Secure America Newsletter March 16, 2003 p.1
The purpose of this newsletter is to make friends of 9/11FSA aware of what our group has been doing, what we have accomplished and what needs to be done. I will try to keep these short and to the point.

VIRGINIA

As you know, Virginia was the source of the “valid ID” (driver’s licenses) which allowed many of the terrorists to board the planes they used to kill our loved ones. (Florida supplied the rest.)

These two states were among the few that did not require proof of legal presence in the US in order to obtain a driver’s license, that is, illegal aliens were permitted to obtain drivers’ licenses.

Florida has already changed its law to prohibit issuance to illegals, and now Virginia State Sen. Jay O’Brien and Delegate David Albo have introduced a bill to outlaw this practice. That bill is now known as HB 1954.

The bill was expected to pass the lower house, the House of Delegates, but was expected to be killed by the State Senate. Some of our members and local activists spoke in support of the bill in the Senate Committee on the Courts, and the bill was approved there and sent to the Senate floor.

This is where the major opposition was going to be met. We did some intensive lobbying (34 of 40 Senators or their aides were spoken to). The bill passed the Senate in a result that surprised everyone: 32 to 8.

It then passed the House 82 to 16.

Importantly, the amendments that opponents tried to attach to the bill that would have rendered in useless were all defeated.

The bill has been sent to Governor Warner, and there is a **strong possibility** that he will veto it. The illegal immigrant lobby is angry about the success of the bill in the Assembly and is applying extraordinary pressure on the Governor. The Washington Post, a strong supporter of cheap labor and open borders editorialized that the Gov. should veto the bill.

ALL OF YOU WITH FRIENDS IN VIRGINIA SHOULD HAVE THEM CONTACT THE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE AT (804) 786 2211 AND ASK HIM TO SIGN HB1954.

THE ISSUE IS CLEAR: WILL VIRGINIA CONTINUE TO OFFER ITS DRIVERS’ LICENSES TO ILLEGALS AND TERRORISTS OR WILL IT END THIS PRACTICE?

Our Virginia allies are arranging a press conference for Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday, 3/18,19 or 20, and those of you who would be willing to go to Richmond for this will be welcome. Bob Shoemaker, a leader of the Virginia group has told me that there will be money available to help with transportation costs.

MARYLAND

MD. law currently bans giving drivers’ licenses to illegals. Due to pressure from the illegal immigrant lobby the powerful Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, Delegate. Vallario, introduced HB 838 to change the law to PERMIT illegals to get Maryland drivers’ licenses.

On March 5, the Judiciary Committee held a hearing on the bill. The advance word among legislators that the bill was certain to sail through Del. Vallario’s committee and be approved with no serious opposition.

The hearing room had seats for 72 spectators, but Vallario had had 150 supporters of licenses for illegals bused to the hearings, where they were allowed to stand or sit behind and between the legislators as well as solidly pack the aisles. As they seemed all to be complaining about their ineligibility for licenses, this could only mean they were all illegal aliens. (When asked if they were trying to “alter their status to become legal” they nearly all raised their hands. Thus any doubt about their status as illegal aliens was removed.)

About eight or ten 9/11 family members attended along with twenty local supporters attended the hearing. We withstood hours of testimony as to why illegals, who have violated numerous laws in coming, residing and working in the US, should be granted the privilege of a license.

We then got our turn. Before the hearing was over, a sympathetic Delegate informed us that in the 22 member committee, 12 votes were needed for approval, and he had counted “at least” 12 against. (Del. Gutierrez, the named main sponsor of the bill looked very depressed by the end of the hearing.)

No votes were held on that day.

I WILL CONTACT YOU AFTER SPEAKING WITH OUR ALLIES IN THE LEGISLATURE about what we should do next, if anything, to sustain this apparent victory.

CONNECTICUT

Connecticut is another state where the law permits illegals to get drivers' licenses. However the DMV under the leadership of Commissioner Gary DeFilippo has instituted regulations that prohibit issuance to illegals and terrorists.

At the request of members of 9/11FSA, Sen. Andrew Roraback introduced S.B 610 to change the states statutes to embed the ban into the law.

The bill is currently in the Transportation Committee. (All legislative committees in the CT legislature are joint House-Senate committees, so there are Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and members of both houses)

On March 12, seven 9/11 FSA members and friends lobbied members of the Transportation Committee. Again, we were warned in advance that there would be tough sledding for us.

To the contrary, we met very receptive legislators.

At least two that I spoke to said: ‘You mean to say illegals can get drivers' licenses in Connecticut? I didn’t know that. I don’t think illegals should get Connecticut licenses.’

The final result was a firm commitment from both the House Chair (Rep. Cocco, D-Bridgeport) and the Senate Chair (Sen. Ciotto, D-Newington) that the bill would get out of committee and to the floors of both houses.

Such a commitment is a great achievement, but of course, we will need to lobby as many of the members of the two houses as we can.

THOSE OF YOU WHO CAN MAKE THE TRIP TO HARTFORD TO LOBBY, LET ME KNOW, I WILL BE HAPPY TO ACCOMPANY YOU. LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU ARE AVAILABLE.

COLORADO

In Colorado, a bill has been introduced that goes beyond DL reform.

HB 03-1224 would require that for most purposes, people who apply for various state benefits would have to show legal presence in the US. Obvious exceptions are dealings with police and emergency services including hospital ERs.

9/11FSA, in cooperation with former Democratic Gov. Richard Lamm wrote a statement in support of the bill. Gov Lamm, speaking at the legislature for the first time since he left office 15 years ago, read our statement.

He sent me two emails about the effect of our letter in the two committees considering the bill. I quote from those emails:

“Your letter was very well received and a powerful reason that the bill got reported out to the floor of the House. The vote was 7-4. I am arranging for a copy to be placed on each legislator's desk the morning the bill is considered by the whole House.”

“Our Colorado bill, making it illegal to accept these cards passed the Senate Committee yesterday 7-0, and your letter was one of the reasons. Thanks again, it was terrific! “