

Maryland Legislators, Supported by Members and Friends of 9/11 FSA Take the Offensive on Illegal Immigration

Maryland immigration reform supporters in the Maryland legislature went on the offensive this session, introducing a package of bills designed to contribute to the effort against terrorism by discouraging illegal immigration.

Delegates Rick Impallaria, Pat McDonough, Herb McMillan introduced bills that would help enforce existing laws on illegal immigration:

1. HB-7 to ban state acceptance of consular identification documents
2. HB-4, HB-79, and HB-89 to require detention of illegal aliens discovered in the conduct of normal police work.
3. HB-41 to ban issuance of driver's licenses to illegal aliens.
4. HB-40 to suspend the license and seize the automobile of any person who knowingly allows an illegal alien to drive their car.

Because the Maryland legislature is currently dominated by supporters of the illegal alien lobby, neither we nor our allies in the legislature had any illusions that these bills would receive a fair consideration and of course they did not. All were killed in committee. Rather, Reps Impallaria, McDonough and McMillan were making a statement that legislators who are concerned about upholding the law and maintaining Americans' security are not going to be silent about the dangers of open borders.

We, the victims of open borders, must make sure that those responsible for killing these bills are held accountable.

The sponsors of these important bills explained that their immediate objective is to begin a debate within the legislature. They view enactment of these measures as a long-term objective. The sponsoring Delegates held a series of rallies around the state beginning with a rally on February 28 in Baltimore. The outcome of the bill to prevent detention of illegal aliens by police is unclear. During the hearings the arguments for the good bills and against the bad bills were far more cogent based on the merits of the issue, Constitutionality and court precedent.

Hearings on the bills were held on Feb 18, and the following immigration reform activists were present:

Maryland activists Bob Gresh, Bob Obenshein, and Joel Lichvar

Virginia activists Bob Shoemaker and Bill Buchanan

9/11 FSA members April Gallop and Bruce DeCell

FAIR staff members Dan Stein, Paul S. Egan and Michael Hethmon

Supporters of immigration reform should not be discouraged by this defeat which the sponsors expected. This is just the opening round

At the same, members of the legislature who take their instructions from the illegal alien lobby introduced HB579 which would have prohibited police officers from arresting illegal aliens.

The following delegates, all tools of the illegal alien lobby introduced this anti-law enforcement and anti-security bill were Delegates Nathan-Pulliam, Gutierrez, Ramirez, Anderson, Benson, Bobo, Bronrott, Franchot, Gaines, Hixson, Hurson, Jones, Lee, Madaleno, Marriott, Menes, Murray, and Petzold

Following is a more detailed summary of what happened at the hearings. As usual, the illegal alien lobby bused in crowds of illegals to use up much of the viewer gallery seats and much of the period set aside for testimony.

Health and Government Operations Hearing

HB-7 to ban state acceptance of consular identification documents

Conduct of the hearing allowed the proponents of the legislation to present first followed by opponents of the legislation.

The hearing room was crowded, mostly with individuals brought to the hearing by activist groups such as Casa of Maryland. Many in attendance were illegal aliens, according to the Washington Times, <http://www.washtimes.com/metro/20040218-115730-8791r.htm>.

Delegates Impallaria and McDonough testified in favor of their legislation followed by April Gallop of 9/11 FSA and Paul Egan of FAIR. The members of the committee asked no questions of substance.

Several panels consisting of elected county officials, Hispanic organizations, the immigration law bar, and religious groups opposing the legislation followed these presentations opposed the bill.

Judiciary Committee Hearing

HB-4, HB-79, and HB-89 to require detention of illegal aliens discovered in the conduct of normal police work.

Conduct of the hearing allowed the proponents of the legislation to present first followed by opponents of the legislation.

This hearing room was crowded to capacity, mostly with opponents of the legislation who had been brought to the hearing by activist groups such as Casa of Maryland and the Hispanic Coalition of Maryland. Others, including many illegal aliens who lacked or carried fraudulent identification that might have been discovered at the building security checkpoint, remained in the courtyard outside of the building where a press conference and rally were held.

The hearing began by taking up all three bills that would require police officials locally or statewide to detain illegal aliens discovered in the course of normal police work. Delegates Impallaria and McDonough presented first. Michael Hethmon of FAIR and Bob Gresh of Maryland joined them on the same panel.

Both Delegates supported the bills requiring detention in Baltimore and Harford counties because each has high security facilities that might become targets of terrorists. They also supported the statewide legislation as ultimately necessary to curb the population of illegal aliens throughout the state. Hethmon focused his attention on the bill requiring statewide detention of illegal aliens as the most consistent with federal laws that ban aiding and abetting of illegal aliens by any official of any jurisdiction and authorize state and local cooperation with federal immigration enforcement authorities.

Hethmon made the dual argument that state and local police already have inherent power to enforce immigration law under federal and Maryland law, but that these bills were necessary because of resistance to federal law by local politicians, and that federal law prohibited those resistance policies.

Numerous panels consisting of 65 individuals who had signed up to testify against the legislation followed this panel.

The speakers in opposition made two types of arguments. The lawyers made self-serving arguments that local police are not capable of understanding immigration law and determining the immigration status of detained individual, and that illegal aliens would refuse to report crimes if their immigration status was in question. Most other speakers, representing obscure ethnic organizations and immigrant rights groups, made emotional appeals that state enforcement of immigration law would stigmatize and discriminate against immigrants in general.

HB-41 to ban issuance of driver's licenses to illegal aliens.

Del. McMillan was the lead witness in favor of banning licenses for illegal aliens. HB-41 had bipartisan sponsors in the House of Delegates. Bill supporters included a civic association leader, a retired schoolteacher, and a Hispanic environmental activist joined him on the first panel.

Del. McMillan remained with the succeeding panels of supporters. In addition to McMillan, the second panel consisted of Michael Hethmon of FAIR, Bruce DeCell of 9/11 FSA, a retired INS enforcement official and Bob Gresh, a Maryland reform group leader.

Two taxi drivers from Middle Eastern countries who supported the legislation because they fear displacement by individuals who may not bother to become licensed as cab drivers and who haven't bothered to enter the country legally. A group for African American citizens from the Chillum community in Prince Georges County testified that giving illegal alien's drivers' licenses was unfair.

Opponents consisted of several panels consisting of witnesses representing the American Immigration Lawyers Association, immigration lawyers, and attorneys representing Hispanic organizations in the state, domestic violence agencies, religious groups, Hispanic organizations, the Prince Georges County states attorney and the Hispanic liaison for the Prince Georges County Executive. This testimony was a more elaborate and detailed version of the pro-illegal testimony on HB 579.

HB-40 to suspend the license and seize the automobile of any person who knowingly allows an illegal alien to drive their car.

Dels Impallaria and McDonough were the lead witnesses on this bill followed by Michael Hethmon of FAIR.

Delegates Impallaria and McDonough and FAIR's Hethmon testified in favor. The Delegates compared the law to other widely accepted "negligent entrustment" laws that prescribe similar penalties for allowing a vehicle to be used by an intoxicated or criminal driver.

Hethmon presented a legal argument, citing federal case law that illegal aliens have no rights to travel or operate a vehicle.

Hethmon was the last speaker at this more than seven-hour hearing. The speakers in opposition had all left before the hearing ended.

Delegates Nathan-Pulliam, Gutierrez, Ramirez, Anderson, Benson, Bobo, Bronrott, Franchot, Gaines, Hixson, Hurson, Jones, Lee, Madaleno, Marriott, Menes, Murray, and Petzold

HB- 579 to prevent detention of illegal aliens.

This measure was introduced at the last minute as a hostile counter-measure to the other bills.

The proponent testimony came from the same coalition members as the opposition to all the other measures, and the arguments were essentially more elaborate variations on the same themes.

FAIR's Hethmon was the only speaker in opposition. He made a legal argument that the measure was unconstitutional under both federal and state law.