

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chicago/chi-0404010271apr01,1,4954211.story>

Senate votes to keep OT rule out of state

Driver's licenses proposal rejected

By Ray Long and Christi Parsons, Tribune staff reporters. Tribune staff reporter Molly Parker contributed to this report

April 1, 2004

SPRINGFIELD -- The Senate voted Wednesday to override restrictive new federal rules reducing overtime pay for workers, while the House soundly rejected a controversial plan to let undocumented immigrants get driver's licenses.

The action unfolded as the Senate also approved Mayor Richard Daley's signature proposal to give targeted relief to people fighting rising property taxes throughout the state and a measure to set a statewide standard for fire safety after the deaths of six people in a blaze at a Chicago high-rise.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich is expected to sign the overtime bill, possibly as soon as Thursday, when the federal rules are set to cut back on the number of employees eligible for overtime pay after a 40-hour week. The state's actions will keep things as they are in Illinois.

"The Bush administration has made a systematic effort through the Department of Labor to reclassify a whole host of jobs as not deserving overtime despite the fact that these are relatively low-wage, high-stress jobs," said Sen. Barack Obama (D-Chicago), the bill's sponsor and a candidate for U.S. Senate. "What we've done is to make sure the state of Illinois maintains existing overtime rules."

But Sen. Peter Roskam (R-Wheaton) argued the bill "puts us on an island" that makes Illinois a more costly place to do business than other states.

With the House gallery packed with onlookers, representatives decisively defeated a hotly debated plan to let the secretary of state issue driver's licenses to immigrants who are not legal residents of the U.S.

Some lawmakers argued that the measure would improve safety on Illinois roadways because applicants must be tested before getting licenses and later must have proof of insurance. Many of the 300,000 undocumented residents in Illinois drive without licenses, sponsors argued.

"This will encourage them to learn the rules of the road," said Rep. Edward Acevedo (D-Chicago), the sponsor.

The discussion grew testy as two veteran black lawmakers squared off against the measure, complaining it offered special privileges to residents who violate immigration law.

"I think we're sending a bad message that it's OK to break the law," said Rep. Mary Flowers (D-Chicago).

Ultimately, most black lawmakers voted for Acevedo's bill, which failed 68-43.

But Rep. Susana Mendoza (D-Chicago) complained about opposition from Flowers and Rep. Monique Davis (D-Chicago).

"It's a rainbow coalition, but sometimes it seems like there's only one color in that rainbow," Mendoza said. "When they talk about supporting minority issues, they should be inclusive. It works both ways. They ask us for our support. We're happy to do so. But we also need their support in return."

In the upper chamber, Sen. James DeLeo (D-Chicago) championed Daley's property-tax relief proposal, sending the measure to the House. Provisions would let a senior citizen with a household income of up to \$45,000, now \$40,000, take advantage of the senior tax freeze.

The bill would allow a general homestead exemption if an assessed valuation increases by more than 20 percent over

the previous assessed value. The bill also would encourage homeowners to fix up their homes by raising the homestead-improvement exemption to \$75,000 from \$45,000.

The fire-safety legislation, pushed by Sen. Ira Silverstein (D-Chicago), would require owners of a public building over four stories high to either make sure no stairwell door is locked or to install an electronic-release system. It reflects action taken in Chicago after the deaths in October's Loop high-rise fire.

The Senate voted overwhelmingly for a scaled-down version of a proposal that prompted the governor to charge last fall that legislators were spending like a "bunch of drunken sailors." Sen. Maggie Crotty (D-Oak Forest) put a \$25 million cap on the cost of the legislation aimed at sending financial aid to communities squeezed by property-tax limits.

Elsewhere, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved a bill targeting murderers who also rape their victims. Currently they cannot be charged with rape if three years have passed since the murder. A person can be charged with rape if the victim reports the rape within two years of the incident and a DNA profile of the defendant has been entered into a sex-offender database.

The bill would expand the law to let prosecutors bring rape charges anytime after the incident in cases when the rape victims also were murdered and when DNA from the crime scene also is available.

Copyright © 2004, [Chicago Tribune](#)



WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR

Suburban Chicago's Information Source

[Home](#) | [EZ Links](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Newspaper Ads](#)

Thursday, Ap

Licenses legislation

By Sara Hooker Daily Herald Staff Writer
Posted 4/1/2004

SPRINGFIELD - Suburban lawmakers from both parties Wednesday helped shoot down an effort in the House to allow illegal immigrants to apply for driver's licenses.

The plan would have allowed the estimated 300,000 illegal immigrants in Illinois who are unable to get Social Security cards to be able to drive legally after learning safety rules.

But the plan only got 43 of the 60 votes it needed to pass, with suburban lawmakers contributing more than a third of the 68 votes against.

State Rep. John Millner, a Carol Stream Republican, said he voted the way his constituents wanted.

"The people said 'absolutely not,'æ" Millner said. "I received literally hundreds of e-mails and phone calls from members of our district saying that they don't know why we're providing the keys of the kingdom, in other words driver's licenses, to people who are considered illegal."

The plan's sponsor, state Rep. Edward Acevedo, a Chicago Democrat, said his legislation fell victim to election-year politics.

"It was a tough decision to move this legislation through in an election year, but we felt it was important to keep this issue alive," Acevedo said.

All five suburban Democrats in politically vulnerable districts voted against the measure. They joined 20 suburban Republicans in casting "no" votes.

The House measure was a reworked version of legislation that failed in the Senate last fall, requiring immigrants to show a birth certificate from their home country, be fingerprinted and photographed and pay a higher fee before being issued a license. The ID would not have made the person eligible to apply for a gun license card.

Visitors in the gallery cheered as a handful of representatives spoke out in support of the plan, saying it was a measure of safety, not a matter of immigration rules. Many contended that by allowing immigrants to drive legally it would ensure they learned to operate a vehicle correctly, thus making the roads safer for all drivers.

But those against the plan said it left too many unanswered questions and some, like state Rep. Monique Davis, also a Chicago Democrat, said the state should not reward those who disregard the law.

"How do you look at other groups and say 'It's OK what you've done, we're going to coddle you?'"æ" Davis said.

Licenses: Visitors cheer vote