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## License issue on hold for illegal immigrants

By John Patterson Daily Herald State Government Editor  
 Posted November 20, 2003

SPRINGFIELD - Efforts to let illegal immigrants get state driver's licenses are on hold until next year, supporters said Wednesday.

Although a series of stricter security provisions were added in an effort to win over critics, the key sponsors said they will not push the plan until the General Assembly reconvenes in January.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who supports the idea, called it a tactical mistake to delay a vote. But opponents said supporters have underestimated the public's concerns and cast doubts on whether it would ever become law.

The proposal came within one vote of passing the Illinois Senate earlier this month. Supporters said they hope to use the coming months to build public support. However, Blagojevich said supporters should press now.

Under the proposal, illegal immigrants would have to be fingerprinted, pay income taxes, submit birth records and passports, and pay additional fees to get licenses.

Another provision requires the person getting the license to submit proof of auto insurance within 30 days. The licenses could not be used to get state ID cards needed to buy guns.

"We are addressing every single issue that has been raised," said state Sen. Miguel del Valle, a Chicago Democrat and the main sponsor. "We've peeled away every issue, leaving only one which will go unaddressed because we can't address it and that is the issue of whether or not a driver's license should be given to an undocumented person in the state of Illinois."

Del Valle argues that if undocumented immigrants are going to be here it's better to have names, fingerprints, and photos on file and require them to have insurance and pay taxes.

But critics were not won over.

"I think it still has the underlying problem that the supporting documents have to be verified by the secretary of state employees, and I question the ability of those employees to make decisions about the authenticity of birth documents, for example, from Sri Lanka," said state Sen. Peter Roskam, a Wheaton Republican. "I think the proponents of this bill have underestimated the real serious security concerns that people particularly feel."

Also apparently stalled in the General Assembly is legislation that would ban

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discrimination against gays and homosexuals. Blagojevich said that with Democrats controlling the House and Senate "you would think it would be a no-brainer" to pass the plan. But downstate lawmakers from both parties have not warmed to it and supporters were uncertain of its future.

Licenses: Gay legislation also held up

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