

## Illegal immigrant debate twists on drivers' license bill



(AP photo)

State Sen. Brian Frosh, chairman of the Senate Judicial Proceedings, says a bill to block illegal immigrants from getting Maryland drivers' licenses 'bills will have a difficult time getting a critical mass.'

Len Lazarick, The Examiner

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**Annapolis** -

Some senators want to stop issuing Maryland drivers' licenses to illegal immigrants and make you prove you're a U.S. citizen to get a license.

Others want the state to stop spending money on the federally imposed Real ID license — which would also make all Maryland drivers prove their citizenship.

The debate on drivers' licenses is one of the flash points in the heated debate over immigration in this session. Hundreds of mainly Hispanic demonstrators came to the State House Monday night to protest proposals to curtail licenses and benefits for illegals.

"I think the Senate is as divided as the bills," said Sen. Brian Frosh, chairman of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, which heard testimony on the bills. "The bills will have a difficult time getting a critical mass for either side."

Sen. Nancy Jacobs, R-Harford County, observed that some of Monday's demonstrators were using credit cards with photos as the identification needed to enter the state capitol complex.

Sen. Jennie Forehand, a Montgomery County Democrat, wants to stop all state funding for implementation of Real ID because of its cost to the state — at least \$15 per license — and the creation of a national database that would make identity theft that much easier.

She was supported by the American Civil Liberties Union, which calls Real ID a national identity card, and groups who work with immigrants.

On the other side are bills sponsored by Sens. James Brochin and David Brinkley that would require a driver to show lawful presence in the United States.

"We're giving out 1,700 [licenses] every single week to residents who are not citizens of the United States," said Brochin, a Baltimore County Democrat.

The legislation by Brochin and Brinkley was opposed by some of the same groups who

avored Forehand's bill. "It's an unenforceable bill," said immigration lawyer Jonathan Greene, since U.S. immigration does not specify a status called "lawful presence."

The bills were also opposed by a long string of representatives of local churches that work with immigrants — the Unitarian Universalists, Lutherans and the Maryland Catholic Conference.

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