

Georgia Immigration Law Targets Water Services, Marriage

Published March 26, 2012

[Georgia](#) legislators are considering a proposal that would bar undocumented immigrants from receiving marriage licenses or access to water and sewage.

The bill sponsored by Sen. Barry Loudermilk, R-Cassville, has gotten a lot of attention because it would also bar undocumented immigrants from the state's public colleges, universities and technical schools. But another provision that's generated very little discussion removes foreign passports from a list of identification documents that government agencies can accept for certain transactions. To be acceptable, foreign passports would have to be accompanied by federal immigration documentation proving someone is in the country legally.

"It's very interesting that the reliability of foreign passports is being questioned by the Georgia Legislature when the Transportation and Security Administration has considered the passport to be a very secure form of ID," said Azadeh Shahshahani, an attorney with the [American Civil Liberties Union](#). "I think my worry is that perhaps some legislators might not be aware of the implications of this because it seems so innocuous. It doesn't say on its face that undocumented immigrants can't get water or can't marry."

Loudermilk said the possibility of preventing undocumented immigrants from obtaining marriage licenses and access to water and sewage service was not intentional. He added that an amendment was likely that would remedy that.

Versions of the bill have cleared the state Senate and a House committee. If the full House passes it, the Senate would have to approve changes made by the House before the session ends Thursday.

Under last year's law cracking down on illegal immigration, the state attorney general's office was charged with creating a list of "secure and verifiable" documents that government agencies could accept if they require identification for an official purpose. The list was released last summer and includes a U.S. passport, U.S. military identification card and a U.S. driver's license, among other documents. It also includes foreign passports, the only document on the list that undocumented immigrants would be able to obtain.

By removing foreign passports from the list, the new bill would technically prevent undocumented immigrants from getting a marriage license in Georgia or from accessing water and sewage service in the many municipalities that require identification to turn on service. That's because undocumented immigrants wouldn't have the extra paperwork needed to prove not only that they have a passport, but that they are in the country legally.

However, it's possible undocumented immigrants may not face much of a hurdle if local authorities don't bring their policies in line with the list of accepted documents. In many instances, local authorities still accept documents that aren't on the list approved by the attorney general.

A survey by The Associated Press of the websites or staff of probate courts in Georgia's 25 most populous counties shows at least 21 currently accept a birth certificate or a foreign driver's license as acceptable identification for those seeking a marriage license. Neither of those documents is on the attorney general's list.

Unlike other utilities, which are generally managed by private companies in Georgia, water and sewage services are provided by local government agencies. Calls to water and sewage authorities in some parts of the state found that some currently accept foreign driver's licenses, which is not acceptable under the current law.

Technically, an agency could be penalized under the law for accepting documents not on the attorney general's list. But penalties are unlikely, as long as any problems that spark complaints are quickly rectified.

The author of last year's illegal immigration crackdown, Rep. Matt Ramsey, said he believes all public agencies should comply with last year's law and should accept only identification documents on the attorney general's list. But the Peachtree City Republican added that he believes a U.S. birth certificate, though not a foreign one, should qualify as a "secure and verifiable" document. The attorney general's office has the power to add documents to the list.

<http://latino.foxnews.comhttp://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2012/03/26/georgia-immigration-law-would-bar-targets-marriage-licenses-sewage-service/>