

Legislature 2008; House OKs bill to take illegal residents' cars

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Body

The state **House** approved a **bill** Thursday that would allow police to seize **cars** from **illegal** immigrants.

Sponsor James Mills (R-Gainesville) repeatedly told **House** members that the measure would protect Georgia **residents** from the "epidemic" of **illegal** immigration.

"The state of Georgia's door is being kicked down," Mills said. Immigrants are coming from "Iraq, Iran ... Jordan," he said. "We don't know where they're from."

The measure, which passed 104-51, now moves to the Senate. It is part of a package of about 10 Republican proposals introduced this legislative session aimed at discouraging **illegal** immigration in Georgia.

The **bill** would let police seize any vehicle driven by an **illegal** immigrant that is involved in a traffic violation or accident.

It would apply to rented and leased vehicles if the owner knew, or should have known, that the driver was an **illegal** immigrant. It also would include bank-owned **cars** if the interest-holder knew the driver was an **illegal** immigrant.

In a floor debate, some legislators asked how police would be able to determine during a traffic stop whether a driver was an **illegal** immigrant. Some wondered whether it would create an atmosphere for racial profiling drivers who police think might be **illegal** immigrants.

Rep. Bob Lane (R-Statesboro), who represents southeast Georgia, worried that farmers would lose their vehicles if they loaned them to workers who might be **illegal**.

"Would you have to go down to the police station and say, 'I didn't know this person was an **illegal** immigrant, and I lent him the **car** to go down to the store to get some grass seed'? " Lane asked.

Mills said if the owner of a vehicle presented a sworn affidavit that he or she did not know the driver was an **illegal** immigrant, he or she would get the **car** back.

Graphic

Photo: ELISSA EUBANKS / StaffFrom left, Rep. Stephanie Stuckey Benfield (D-Atlanta), Rep. DuBose Porter (D-Dublin) and Rep. Calvin Smyre (D-Columbus) discuss the car-seizure bill the House passed Thursday./ImageData*

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