

## **LEGISLATURE BRIEFS: Immigration status bill approved**

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**Byline:** BRIAN FEAGANS, **BILL** HENDRICKS

Staff

### **Body**

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A Senate-passed **bill** clarifying that judges and parole board members can consider someone's **immigration status** won easy approval Thursday from the state House of Representatives.

Such authority already exists. But the **bill**'s sponsor, Sen. John Douglas (R-Social Circle), has said he fears some Georgia cities could join places like New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles in declaring themselves "sanctuaries," where officials generally are barred from asking whether someone is in the country illegally.

SB 23 would supersede any local rules and allow judges to investigate someone's **immigration status** before determining bail, handing down a sentence or deciding on probation. Douglas has said the power is critical because illegal immigrants, when bailed out of jail or paroled, sometimes flee the state.

SB 23, which passed 153-6, now awaits the governor's signature.

Driver's license **bill** alive for final day

A **bill** that would make driving without a license a felony on the third offense hit a speed bump Thursday but remains alive for the final day of the General Assembly.

The House suspended consideration of SB 15 until today after several legislators --- including House Speaker Glenn Richardson (R-Hiram) --- expressed concerns about making felons out of people for traffic offenses.

Sen. John Wiles (R-Marietta), the **bill**'s sponsor, has called it a public safety measure designed to discourage people who haven't taken a driver's exam from driving state roads. But immigrant advocates have called SB 15 an overly harsh attack on people who are in the country illegally and don't qualify for a Georgia driver's license.

No changes likely in PeachCare rules

A House-Senate conference committee was appointed Thursday to try negotiate changes to the PeachCare for Kids insurance program, but several lawmakers said they doubted a consensus could be reached before the General Assembly adjourns.

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Barring a last-minute compromise, that would mean that the eligibility level for PeachCare families will remain at 235 percent of the federal poverty level and not be reduced to 200 percent, as proposed by House Speaker Glenn Richardson, R-Hiram and endorsed by Gov. Sonny Perdue.

In what amounted to token votes, the Senate again rejected Richardson's **bill**, and the House turned thumbs down on the Senate's substitute version.

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