

REAL ID ACT AN ATTACK ON IMMIGRANTS

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Body

LAST THURSDAY, the House of Representatives passed the infamous **Real ID Act**. The Senate is expected to do the same this week.

The vote was overwhelmingly in favor - 368 to 58 - which is not surprising because Republicans attached the blatantly anti-**immigrant** measure to a massive \$82 billion emergency spending bill, with \$75.9 billion earmarked for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-NY), who represents one of the most diverse districts in the country, said that it was "an abuse of power" by the House Republican leaders to have attached the anti-**immigrant** provisions - the brainchild of Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) - to a must-pass bill.

It also was an assault on democracy, a way of ramming the bill down the throats of Americans without any discussion.

"This is a downright mean bill," Crowley said, "which would not only make it nearly impossible for international victims of abuse and torture to seek political asylum, but would also make our streets and cities more dangerous."

The **Real ID**, no matter what its proponents say, is nothing more than an unwarranted **attack** on immigration posing as an anti-terrorist measure.

This bill "tries to paint **immigrants** as potential terrorists and slam the door on them," said Jeanne Butterfield, executive director of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, in a very clear assessment of the legislation's **real** intention.

"In the name of national security," said Arti Shahani of Families for Freedom, a defense network for **immigrants** facing deportation, "**Real ID** would strip **immigrants** of driver's licenses; end the constitutional right to habeas corpus for the first time since the Civil War; prevent people fleeing persecution from gaining asylum here and almost certainly increase deaths at the border."

What it will not do is discourage the thousands of undocumented **immigrants** for whom driving is a matter of survival.

Sensenbrenner has repeatedly used the example of several of the 9/11 hijackers who used driver's licenses to get through airport security.

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But the truth is that even if the **Real ID** had been in effect those days, it would not have prevented the hijackers, who had come into the U.S. with legally issued visas, from getting a driver's license or a state-issued identification card.

Something similar happens with the new, Draconian asylum provisions, which are based on half-truths meant to play on peoples' fears. Sensenbrenner also said repeatedly that the new provisions would help judges "ferret out" false asylum petitions.

In fact, terrorists, suspected terrorists, people who have committed certain crimes here and abroad and those considered security risks already are barred from political asylum in the U.S.

"This legislation," Crowley told the House on Thursday, "which the 9/11 Commission has called unwarranted, was added by the right-wing extremists in the Republican conference whose joy in bashing **immigrants** is exceeded only by their zest for tax cuts for the wealthy." An outrage.

And this is what the country gets instead of the comprehensive, bipartisan reform of immigration laws that it needs more than ever. aruiz@nydailynews.com

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