

Maine Senate OKs welfare benefits for asylum seekers

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AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) - The Republican-controlled Maine Senate has approved a measure that would ensure that the roughly 1,000 people seeking asylum in the state continue to receive municipal welfare benefits.

The Senate voted 29-5 on Thursday in favor of an amendment introduced by Republican Sen. Amy Volk that would allow asylum seekers to qualify for general assistance benefits for up to 24 months. The bill now heads to the Democratic-controlled House.

Republican Gov. Paul LePage started a fierce debate over the issue last year when he directed cities and towns to stop providing general assistance to certain immigrants, including asylum seekers and those who came to the U.S. illegally. A judge recently ruled that LePage's administration doesn't have to reimburse towns for aid provided to those groups.

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