

Metro & Obituaries; Panel to meet this week amid calls to oust Kent

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Highlight: Immigration enforcement at issue. Governor's office declines to comment about complaints.

Body

A new state **panel** charged with helping enforce Georgia's immigration-related laws has announced it will have its first **meeting** this **week amid calls** for Gov. Nathan Deal to **oust** one of its newly appointed members.

The Immigration Enforcement Review Board is scheduled to **meet** noon to 2 p.m. Thursday in the Coverdell Legislative Office Building, Room 606. It's across the street from the state Capitol.

The seven members of the board will be sworn in at the public **meeting** before they elect their chairman and discuss setting up committees and procedures for considering complaints about violations of state immigration laws.

The board is responsible for investigating complaints that city, county and state officials are violating state immigration enforcement laws. It has the power to hold hearings, subpoena documents, adopt regulations and hand out punishment, including fines of up to \$5,000.

The Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League **called** on the governor this month to reconsider his decision to appoint anti-illegal immigration activist Phil **Kent** to the board. The SPLC has long labeled the organization for which **Kent** is the national spokesman, Americans for Immigration Control, a hate group.

Kent's critics also have started a petition drive to **oust** him from the **panel**, **calling** him a "nativist" who uses "intense racist imagery to convey his terrible beliefs." Steve Golden, executive vice president of the Young Democrats of Georgia, started the effort, and he plans to have a news conference at the Capitol today before submitting a copy of the petition to Deal's office. As of Monday morning, the petition had received more than 4,800 signatures.

Other critics have decried the lack of diversity on the **panel**. All seven of its members are white men.

Deal's office so far has declined to comment on **calls** to remove **Kent**. But a spokesman for the governor said the board's seven members include people with different professions and viewpoints.

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Also serving on the board are Coweta County Sheriff Mike Yeager; Dallas Mayor Boyd Austin; Colquitt County Commissioner Terry Clark; Atlanta attorney Ben Vinson; former state legislator Robert Mumford; and Shawn Hanley, former candidate for the state GOP chairmanship.

Kent has defended himself by dismissing the ADL and Southern Poverty Law Center as "left-wing" groups and saying: "I make no apologies for my work over the years to try to have strict enforcement of immigration laws."

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