

Ga. immigration bill revised to target ID fraud

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Body

A state lawmaker who has sponsored a **bill** that would crack down on illegal **immigration** in Georgia is adding an identity fraud provision to discourage the use of false documents when applying for jobs.

State Rep. Matt Ramsey plans to present a **revised** "Illegal **Immigration** Reform and Enforcement Act of 2011" at a House committee meeting Monday. The Peachtree City Republican said in an interview with The Associated Press Saturday that the biggest change to his **bill** was prompted by testimony at public hearings on the legislation.

"Through the hearing process, we kept hearing from folks about the problem caused by people who are seeking to gain employment and passing fraudulent identification on employers," he said.

Ramsey looked at the identity theft statute and worked with prosecutors in the state to craft a provision that would make it a felony to present fraudulent identification documents or information for the purpose of gaining employment, he said.

The stiff penalty one to 15 years in jail and a fine of up to \$250,000 is meant to help protect employers who don't always recognize false documents and might sometimes find themselves unknowingly hiring illegal immigrants, he said.

Despite testimony from many groups and individuals expressing concern about a proposed requirement that all employers with more than five employees verify the **immigration** status of new hires by using a federal database called E-Verify, Ramsey said he's not willing to budge.

"Illegal employment is clearly the root cause of illegal **immigration**, and if we don't take a serious step in this state toward addressing illegal employment, we're not going to ever get substantially at the problem," he said.

The **revised bill** does address concerns that were raised about the potential for frivolous lawsuits that could stem from part of the proposed law that would allow individual citizens to file lawsuits against local governments or government agencies that don't comply with requirements to check the **immigration** status of new hires or applicants for public benefits.

The new version of the **bill** provides for a "notice and cure period" so that local governments or government agencies that are unknowingly violating the requirements have a chance to bring themselves into compliance before litigation could begin.

Ramsey said he's spent a lot of time working on the **bill** and hopes the House Judiciary Non-Civil committee will vote on it Monday.

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"This is not a **bill** that needed to get rushed out day one or two of the session," he said. "This is something that requires due diligence and a great deal of work and that's exactly what we've done and we're real confident in the product we have right now."

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