

Senate Amendment Pushes Back Deadline for Border-Crossing Passport

By Patrick Yoest, CQ Staff

Opponents of new border-crossing requirements scored a victory in the Senate with an amendment to immigration reform legislation that would push back the deadline for the requirements' implementation.

The amendment, adopted by voice vote Wednesday, was added to comprehensive immigration overhaul legislation (S 2611) currently being considered in the Senate. The amendment was introduced by Sens. Patrick J. Leahy, D-Vt., and Ted Stevens, R-Alaska.

Under the deadline proposed in the amendment, travelers crossings the Northern border will have to begin carrying a passport, or a passport equivalent, by June 1, 2009. Under language included in the Intelligence Reform Act of 2004 (PL 108-458), the deadline falls on Jan. 1, 2008.

Leahy and other Northern senators have complained that the deadline places onerous restriction on travel and commerce in border states, and that the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department have made little progress on technology for border crossing cards that would act as passport equivalents.

"This will head off the turmoil that this poorly developed plan would impose on our citizens and on our economy, especially in border states," said Leahy said in a statement. "We want to buy enough time to fix these problems beforehand, instead of having to fix the mess it will cause afterward."

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