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Immigration Legislation Moving in the House and Senate

On Wednesday, Sept. 20, the Senate voted 94-0 to limit debate on a motion to proceed to consideration of HR 6061, the *Secure Fence Act of 2006*. The bill, which passed the House of Representatives on Sept. 14, requires the construction of 700 miles of double-layered fencing along portions of the U.S.-Mexico border. HR 6061 is part of the House's "security first" approach to immigration, and was introduced in response to Congress' failure to reach an agreement on more substantial immigration legislation (HR 4437 and S 2611) this summer. A vote on the *Secure Fence Act* is expected next week before Congress adjourns, but it's passage is not guaranteed.

In the meanwhile, the House may vote on three other border security bills on Thursday. According to *CQ Today*:

"The first (HR 4830) would set new criminal penalties for constructing tunnels under the U.S. border and double penalties for smuggling illegal immigrants, drugs, weapons of mass destruction, or other illegal items through an illegal tunnel. The bill is identical to illegal tunnel provisions in the Senate-passed version of the Homeland Security Appropriations bill (HR 5441)."

"The second (HR 6094), like provisions in the House-passed bill of last year, would allow the Homeland Security Department to detain illegal immigrants indefinitely in certain cases; prohibit gang members from being admitted to the United States, and allow certain gang members to be automatically eligible for deportation."

"The third measure (HR 6095) would require expedited consideration of lawsuits against the federal government involving the enforcement of immigration laws, declare that state and local law enforcement officers have "inherent authority" to apprehend illegal immigrants and transfer them to federal custody, and direct the Justice Department to hire more attorneys to prosecute human smuggling cases."

The Senate is unlikely to consider the three bills individually because there is insufficient time before adjournment. Therefore, the House may add the measures to the 2007 Homeland Security appropriations bill (HR 5441), legislation both chambers plan to enact prior to adjournment.

On Wednesday, the House also passed HR 4844, the *Federal Election Integrity Act of 2006*. HR 4844 would require voters to show photo identification and prove their U.S. citizenship in federal elections. All states would be required to check voters' IDs by the November 2008 election, and by November 2010 would only be able to accept IDs that show proof of citizenship. Currently, the Senate has no plans to consider this bill.

The Washington Office is monitoring immigration legislation in Congress for any impact it may have on libraries and their patrons. We will keep you informed of new developments as they occur.



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ALAWON Editor:
Andy Bridges

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ALA Washington Office
Emily Sheketoff; Executive Director
1615 New Hampshire Ave NW, First
Floor
Washington, D.C. 20009
202.628.8410 (V)
202.628.8419 (F)

Office of Government Relations
Lynne Bradley, Director;
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