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House Judiciary Subcommittee Advances Immigration Measure

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A House Judiciary subcommittee this afternoon gave voice-vote approval to a bill to help immigrant spouses and children of deceased U.S. citizens gain legal residence.

The measure (H.R. 6034), sponsored by Rep. Jim McGovern (D-Mass.), amends the Immigration and Nationality Act to stave off deportation for immigrants without legal status who were married less than two years before their spouses died.

Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.), chairwoman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security and International Law, said the so-called "widow's penalty" is one of the main reasons private bills are filed.

Subcommittee ranking member Steve King (R-Iowa) was the only Member to vote "no" on the bill, saying he needs more time to evaluate the potential consequences on national immigration policy. King often waits until full committee to offer amendments.

"I recognize that there will be another bite at this apple," he said.

In other business, the committee approved two private bills and voted to request Department of Homeland Security reports on two others. Consideration of one bill was postponed to make time for further discussion.

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