

Senate votes on immigration in wee hours

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Senate early Thursday changed an immigration bill so that its proposed guest-worker program expires after five years.

The Washington Post reported that the vote came shortly after midnight and the bill passed by just one vote, 49-48. It wasn't clear how the amendment would impact the future of the delicate bipartisan coalition backing the immigration bill.

Earlier, the Senate had defeated several amendments that members of either party had proclaimed deal breakers. But the Post reported that a few amendments were approved that gave the bill a more conservative look.

One approved amendment would make English the national language, while another would block new legalized immigrants from receiving earned-income tax credits and block them from receiving Social Security benefits if they overstay their visas.

Senators said they might vote Thursday on a procedural motion to cut off debate on the bill so that a vote could be cast Friday.

Before the post-midnight vote on the guest-worker program, Sen. Mel Martinez, R-Fla., who helped craft the bill, said it looked like it would survive a Senate vote.

"It's holding fast," Martinez told the Post. "It's as good as we could hope for right now."
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