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## Legislative roundup: Migrants, abortion on House agenda

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Bill to create charter board moves forward

By Lynn Bonner — [lbonner@newsobserver.com](mailto:lbonner@newsobserver.com)

A state House committee approved a bill prohibiting sex-selective abortions over protests from doctors that it was too vague and from Asian-American women who said it was based on racial stereotypes.

It now goes to the House floor for a vote.

Under the bill, doctors would face lawsuits and fines for performing abortions for women seeking them because of the gender of the fetus.

What has been a problem in other nations has come to the United States, said Barbara Holt, executive director of N.C. Right to Life. "It's becoming a concern in our nation as well with the number of immigrants that come to this country," she said.

Critics said the bill isn't needed because there's no evidence that sex-selective abortions are a problem in the state.

Jina Dhillon, president of North Carolina Women United, said the bill's supporters are pursuing more abortion limits under the guise of gender equality.

Proponents are "throwing around cultural stereotypes about Asian women" and "paying lip service to the words 'gender equality,' and they're claiming they have a solution to this alleged problem," she said.

Dr. Joshua Nitsche, an OB/GYN from Winston-Salem, said the bill's vagueness will force doctors to ask "extreme and interrogative-type questions" to make certain that gender selection is not a significant factor in the woman's decision.

Tami Fitzgerald, executive director of the N.C. Values Coalition and a bill supporter, said doctors won't have to grill women to detect a gender selection motive. In fact, she said, doctor's don't even have to ask about sex selection.

Staff writer Lynn Bonner

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### Charter School Board legislation advances

A bill setting up a state board governing charter schools cleared a Senate committee on its way to a full Senate vote.

The bill has been changed to require teachers in grades 6-12 to have college degrees if they're teaching math, science, social studies or language arts. A previous version would have allowed schools to hire teachers without college degrees for all grades and subjects.

State Board of Education Chairman Bill Cobey said he has concerns about whether having a board

separate from the State Board of Education governing public schools violates the constitution.

But under the bill, the State Board can overrule a charter board decision with a three-fourths vote.

Jerry Tillman, the bill's sponsor, said some lawyers say that will be enough to have the measure pass constitutional muster.

"I would hope that we will be trusted to govern charter schools in addition to the traditional public schools," Cobey said.

Staff writer Lynn Bonner

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### House approves tougher immigration bill

A House panel rejected Democratic attempts to weaken a major immigration bill Wednesday, approving the measure to authorize Arizona-style police powers and give driving permits to those here illegally.

The 9-3 vote in the Judiciary Subcommittee included a few Democrats who favored a revised version, which came after the original bill drew serious opposition.

"It's well-balanced now," said Rep. Paul "Skip" Stam, the speaker pro tem. "It's a law enforcement bill."

The measure, House Bill 786, now heads to the Finance Committee. It allows police to detain those suspected of being in the country illegally for up to 24 hours. Democrats wanted to remove controversial provisions about detainments and appropriate documentation but failed largely along party lines. "I came in here with a bill, and I'd like to leave with one," said Rep. Harry Warren, a Republican from Salisbury and the bill's lead sponsor.

Staff writer John Frank

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### Growler bill approved

A trip to the grocery store may soon include a growler fill along with a carton of milk. A House panel approved a bill Wednesday to allow retailers such as grocery stores and beer specialty shops to fill half-gallon jugs known as growlers from a beer tap, just as the state's growing list of craft breweries can do. South Carolina allows a similar practice.

"With our burgeoning craft brew industry, what this bill would allow is the same thing to happen here in North Carolina," said sponsor Chuck McGrady, a Hendersonville Republican.

Andy Ellen, a lobbyist for the N.C. Retail Merchants Association, said the effort is aimed at beer enthusiasts.

"It's really for people interested in the craft brewery type thing," Ellen said, suggesting a Bud Light growler fill is unlikely.

The House Commerce subcommittee also approved a measure to allow in-stand beer sales at professional sporting events. Only the Carolina Panthers can offer beer sales from vendors walking the aisles because of a cap limiting it to stadiums that seat 60,000 people.

The bill would reduce the capacity cap to 3,000 – making it possible for most sporting teams in North Carolina, particularly minor league baseball teams, to sell beer. .

The legislation prohibits vendors from yelling "beer here."

Only one lawmaker, House Majority Leader Edgar Starnes of Hickory, opposed the two bills, which now go to the House floor.

Staff writer John Frank

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