

Cities take wheel on license law

Three pass resolutions calling for repeal of immigrant driver's license law.

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Several Orange County cities are urging legislators and their constituents to push for a repeal of the new law allowing illegal immigrants to have driver's licenses.

La Palma, Garden Grove and Seal Beach have adopted resolutions opposing Senate Bill 60, signed into law Sept. 5 by former Gov. Gray Davis. Los Alamitos officials are slated to consider a resolution identical to that of Seal Beach on Monday.

Council members who authored or backed the city resolutions say SB60 rewards people for breaking immigration laws and contains loopholes that could fuel identity fraud and undermine national security.

La Palma Mayor Christine Barnes said she proposed her city's resolution — which passed on a 4-1 vote Tuesday — because the legislation is unfair to those immigrants who went through the naturalization process.

"Both of my parents are

from Mexico," she said. "So to me it's not a question of ethnicity; it's about rewarding illegal behavior."

The law would take effect in January. Repealing it is a top priority for Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who requested the Legislature take it up in special session. But a hearing before the Assembly Transportation Committee scheduled for today was postponed with no new date set.

The La Palma resolution commends residents fighting to overturn SB60 and says the law sends a "pernicious message" because it rewards those who have entered the country illegally.

Garden Grove Councilman Mark Leyes wrote his city's resolution, which passed Nov. 11 on a 3-1 vote, with one council member abstaining.

Leyes said he proposed the idea because local law-enforcement agencies would have to deal with potential identity theft associated with the new law.

"I think it's a bad law," he said. "It creates a criminal threat and makes it easier for

everybody to get a new identity."

Those who opposed the resolutions said cities should stay out of state politics or take the plight of their immigrant constituents into consideration before taking an official stance.

Councilman Larry Herman cast the lone dissenting vote in La Palma because he thought city officials should steer clear of the subject, he said.

"I feel that this is a state issue that needs to be resolved by the governor," he said. "We need to instead focus on issues impacting our city."

Lupe Lopez, executive director of Anaheim-based Alianza Indigena, said it's important for residents to know where city leaders stand on the issue.

The Garden Grove resident, who heads the indigenous-rights group, says she opposes her city's resolution because it doesn't take into account the throngs of working-class immigrants who live in the city and would benefit from a driver's license.

"This is like telling them, 'You're able to wash my car but you can't get a license to drive your child to a clinic or a school function,'" she said.