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Borderland Wednesday, January 29, 2003

Lawmakers, groups want ban of Mexican IDs

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Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Lawmakers and groups that advocate stricter U.S. immigration policies are drumming up support this week for legislation that would ban acceptance of the identification cards the Mexican government issued last year to its citizens in the United States.

Rep. Tom Tancredo, R-Colo., and several other lawmakers have scheduled a news conference for today to introduce a House bill that would prohibit government agencies from accepting the "matricula consular" as valid identification.

The Center for Immigration Studies, which also opposes the matricula, charged at a news conference Tuesday that the Mexican government is using the ID card to legitimize the presence here of an estimated 4 million undocumented Mexican immigrants.

The group commissioned a report written by Marti Dinerstein that criticized the matricula. Dinerstein, a fellow at the center, alleged that the ID card is easy to forge and that the information contained on it wasn't available to U.S. authorities.

"The only people who know anything about the person on the card is the Mexican government," she said. "Can we count on the Mexican government to share information about one of its citizens with U.S. law enforcement officials?"

Officials at the Mexican embassy in Washington did not return calls for comment, but they have lobbied for acceptance of the card as part of the embassy's efforts to help the largest group of undocumented immigrants in the United States.

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