

## (September 16, 2008) AP: IL Immigrant Widow; Congress advances bill to allow Chicago immigrant widow

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WASHINGTON (AP) - The U.S. House advanced a special measure Tuesday to allow an illegal immigrant who cared for her paralyzed husband for 14 years before his death to stay in the country.

Chicago-area Rep. Dan Lipinski introduced the bill in January. It was approved without controversy on a voice vote for the special benefit of Corina Turcinovic.

The measure would allow Turcinovic to remain in the United States and apply for permanent legal residency. It must pass the Senate and the president must sign it to become law.

"This is a simple case of justice," Lipinski said. "Ending this ordeal for Corina is now in the hands of the Senate. Bureaucratic red tape should not get in the way of justice."

Turcinovic's attorney, John Colbert, said his client was "extremely happy -- but guarded" because she knows how difficult it is to get private bills passed.

"They're allocated in just really exceptional circumstances, which I believe our case is," Colbert said. "We're optimistic at this stage that it'll get to the Senate and pass there as well."

Lipinski's office said his measure is the first private bill to pass the House in two years, and that only four of 236 private bills have passed both chambers and been enacted into law since 2003.

Turcinovic's husband, Maro, had applied for U.S. citizenship but a "bureaucratic mistake" led to the denial of his application. If it wasn't for the error, Turcinovic could have stayed legally as the wife or widow of a U.S. citizen, according to Colbert. Maro Turcinovic became paralyzed in 1990 after being hit by a drunk driver, and he died in 2004.

Corina Turcinovic was on her way to O'Hare International Airport to be deported in January when U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement stopped the proceedings to give Congress more time to decide on Lipinski's bill. She received a one-year stay of deportation in February.