



**Homeland
Security**

Debunking the Myths

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REAL ID

REAL ID is a nationwide effort to improve the integrity and security of state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards, which in turn will help fight terrorism and reduce fraud.

The 9/11 Commission recommended that the U.S. improve its system for issuing identification documents. In the Commission's words, "At many entry points to vulnerable facilities, including gates for boarding aircraft, sources of identification are the last opportunity to ensure that people are who they say they are and to check whether they are terrorists." The Commission specifically urged the federal government to "set standards for the issuance of sources of identification, such as driver's licenses." Congress responded to this key recommendation by passing the REAL ID Act of 2005. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was charged with implementing the regulations.

REAL ID defines the minimum standards necessary for identification cards being used for "official purposes" such as accessing federal facilities, boarding Federally-regulated commercial aircraft, and entering nuclear power plants. It also enhances the integrity and reliability of driver's licenses and identification cards, strengthens issuance capabilities, and increases security at driver's license and identification card production facilities.

MYTH: REAL ID creates a national identification (ID) card.

FACT: REAL ID simply sets minimum standards so that the public can have confidence in the security and integrity of driver's licenses and identification cards issued by all participating states and jurisdictions.

States and jurisdictions will maintain their ability to design and issue their own unique driver's licenses and identification cards. Each state and jurisdiction will continue to have flexibility with regard to the design and security features used on the card. Where REAL ID details the minimum data elements that must be included on the face of the card, most states and jurisdictions already include all or almost all of these data elements on their cards.

REAL ID identification documents will not be the only form of documentation accepted by the federal government or any other entity. You can still present another form of acceptable identification such as a U.S. passport, military ID, or government identification badge. If you do not have another form of acceptable documentation, however, you may experience delays at the airport due to the requirement for additional security screening.

MYTH: REAL ID creates a national database of personal information.

FACT: REAL ID requires that authorized DMV officials have the capability to verify that an applicant holds only one valid REAL ID. REAL ID does not grant the Federal Government or law enforcement greater access to DMV data, nor does it create a national database.

States will continue to manage and operate databases for driver's license and identification card issuance.

REAL ID does not create a national database or require additional personal information on your driver's license than is already required by most states. It simply verifies the documents an applicant presents at the DMV to confirm the individual's identity and ensure that each individual has only one valid REAL ID.

Personally identifiable information, beyond the minimum information necessary to appropriately route verification queries, will not be stored.

MYTH: REAL ID will diminish privacy.

FACT: The REAL ID final rule calls on states to protect personal identity information. It requires each state to develop a security plan and lists a number of privacy and security elements that must be included in the plan.

The DHS Privacy Office has also issued *Best Practices for the Protection of Personally Identifiable Information Associated with State Implementation of the Real ID Act*, which provides useful guidance to states on how to address the privacy and security of information related to REAL ID.

The REAL ID Act will not allow motor vehicle driver's data to be made available in a manner that does not conform to the Driver's Privacy Protection Act. Furthermore, with REAL ID, DMV employees will be subject to background checks, a necessary step to protect against insider fraud, just one of the vulnerabilities to a secure licensing system. These steps raise the bar for state DMVs beyond what was previously required.

DHS recognizes the importance of protecting privacy and ensuring the security of the personal information associated with implementation of the REAL ID Act.

MYTH: DHS is creating a “hub” in order to gain access to Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) information.

FACT: An electronic verification hub will be designed to facilitate connectivity between the states and data owners to ensure that people applying for a REAL ID are who they say they are. The Federal Government will not gain greater access to DMV information as a result. Only authorized DMV officials and law enforcement will have access to DMV records.

REAL ID requires state DMVs to verify an applicant’s identity document, date of birth, Social Security Number, residence and lawful status, as well as ensure that each individual has only one valid REAL ID. For example, the electronic verification hub will facilitate the state-to-state exchange of information to check for duplicate registrations in multiple states, therefore limiting the ability for persons to obtain multiple licenses for fraudulent purposes.

While DHS has pledged to fund the development and deployment of the hub, states will continue to manage and operate databases for driver’s license and identification card issuance. DHS and the states will work together to ensure that security measures are in place to prevent unauthorized access or use of the information. Personally identifiable information, beyond the minimum information necessary to appropriately route verification queries, will not be stored.

MYTH: REAL ID is an unfunded mandate.

FACT: To date, approximately \$90 million in dedicated grant funds have been offered by DHS to assist states with REAL ID implementation. This includes approximately \$40 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 and \$50 million in FY 2008. An additional 20 percent of State Homeland Security Grant funds are discretionary and can be used for this purpose as well.

The President’s Fiscal Year 2009 budget request includes up to \$150 million in grants for states to implement REAL ID (up to \$110 million from National Security and Terrorism Prevention Grants and again, 20 percent of the State Homeland Security Grants).

DHS requested \$50 million in Fiscal Year 2009 appropriated funds for the establishment of a state-owned and operated verification system. Furthermore, DHS cut the total costs to states by more than \$10 billion from an original estimate of \$14.6 billion to approximately \$3.9 billion, a 73 percent reduction. States will continue to have discretionary authority to use up to 20 percent of their Homeland Security Grant funds for REAL ID implementation.

In order to focus the first phase of enrollment on those persons who may present the highest risk, DHS outlined an age-based enrollment approach to REAL ID allowing other individuals to be phased-in later. Phased-in enrollment eases the burden on states to re-enroll their entire driver’s license and identification card population by providing additional time to accommodate the re-enrollment process.