



ACLU of Massachusetts Calls for Rejection of Real ID
Draft DHS Regulations Ignore Privacy and Civil Liberties Concerns

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2007

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BOSTON – The ACLU of Massachusetts today called for Massachusetts to join the growing number of states considering rejection of the flawed “Real ID” national identity card program.

Under the Real ID Act passed by Congress in 2005 as part of a military appropriations bill, state drivers licenses will not be acceptable for federal ID purposes, such as getting on an airplane or entering a federal courthouse, unless the state complies with federal requirements. A bill pending before the Massachusetts legislature would block implementation of the federal statute in the Commonwealth.

“Real ID’s creation of a centralized database of personal information on virtually every American is a potential treasure-trove for identity thieves and a serious threat to civil liberties,” said Carol Rose, Executive Director of the ACLU of Massachusetts. “We call upon the Massachusetts legislature and Governor Patrick to stand firm against this unfunded federal mandate.

“This plan threatens to create a society in which ‘Your papers, please’ becomes a method of control that we typically associate with the former East German Stasi or South Africa under apartheid,” added Rose. “Real ID is a real nightmare.”

Draft regulations for the federal legislation were released yesterday by the Dept. of Homeland Security, offering an extension until the end of 2009 for states to comply with the creation of the national ID card—but failing to address serious privacy and civil liberties concerns and still imposing billions in costs on states.

“The draft regulations do not allay our concern because the plan still makes personal data extraordinarily vulnerable to misuse and identity theft, yet does little to create real security,” said Rose.

The Real ID legislation requires states to completely rework their systems for issuing drivers licenses at significant cost, and mandates that anyone seeking a drivers license produce documents such as birth certificates to apply for, or renew, their ID card, and to have those documents verified by state vital records offices.

“This is a budget-buster for Massachusetts that, if implemented, will cost taxpayers millions of dollars,” said Rose. “Worse yet, it will create a tremendous headache for anyone who wants a drivers license because it effectively creates an internal federal pass system controlled and regulated by civil servants at the local RMV offices.”

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Moreover, Real ID will do little to prevent identity theft or terrorism, as proponents claim. “Victims of identity theft may be doubly victimized by REAL ID requirements because they will be unable to readily obtain replacement drivers licenses if the required paperwork is stolen or lost,” said Rose.

Across the country, state legislatures are mobilizing to stop Real ID. In Massachusetts, Senator Richard Moore has introduced a bill to block Real ID from being implemented. Last January, Maine became the first state to reject participation in the Real ID Act. Proposals against Real ID have also passed one chamber in eight state legislatures, and similar bills refusing to implement REAL ID have been introduced in at least a dozen others.

“Congress should pursue proposals like the Akaka-Sununu bill or the Allen bill to restore privacy protections,” said Rose. “And every person in Massachusetts should call upon their state legislator to support Senator Moore’s bill to stop REAL ID from being implemented in Massachusetts.”

More information on Real ID is available from the national ACLU at www.realnightmare.org.

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