



TESTIMONY OF RICH THOMPSON

on behalf of the

MAINE CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

supporting

LD 1138: An Act To Prohibit Maine from Participating in a National Identification Card System

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

April 3, 2007

Good Afternoon Senator Hobbins, Representative Simpson, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on the Judiciary. My name is Rich Thompson and I am a registered lobbyist for the Maine Civil Liberties Union, a state-wide organization committed to advancing and preserving civil liberties in Maine through advocacy and education. On behalf of the over 3,400 members of the MCLU, I urge you to support LD 1138.

In January, Maine became the first state in the nation to oppose the Real ID Act of 2005 when an overwhelming bipartisan majority in this legislature supported an anti-Real ID resolution sponsored by Representative Lansley and Senate Majority Leader Mitchell. Maine's resolution spurned what the media referred to as a "state's revolt," with two other states refusing to implement Real ID and similar resolutions and bills pending in over 20 other states. Maine's resolution was just the beginning; the battle against real ID began in Maine, and we must continue to lead the charge.

The Real ID Act remains as much a threat to our privacy today as it was three months ago. Despite nationwide disapproval, the federal government has failed to address the civil liberties problems inherent with the program. The standards put forth by the Real ID Act are problematic in many ways, not the least of which is the threat they pose to our privacy.

To comply with Real ID, states will be required to make the information contained on driver's licenses accessible to Motor Vehicle departments across the nation by including them in a database along with electronic copies of identifying documents like our birth certificates. In addition, the ID cards will include machine-readable zones, making our identifying information available not just to BMV workers but to anyone with a "reader." This will make us vulnerable to private data collection and government tracking of the places we travel and shop.

The proposed federal "fixes" to Real ID are no fix at all. Simply delaying the implementation of Real ID does not change the fact that a de facto national ID card linked to a national database puts us all at risk of identity theft and government tracking. Real ID is so broken that it cannot be fixed; until the federal government repeals the act we must exercise our state's right to refuse to implement Real ID here.

Maine's anti-Real ID resolution was an important first step in keeping Real ID out of this state, but now we should act to solidify that resolve in law. LD 1138 would prohibit the Secretary of State from taking steps to implement a national ID card system. Prohibiting such a dangerous system is crucial to protecting our civil liberties. We can't afford to stop short of enacting a law.

A diverse coalition of Mainers has spoken out in opposition to Real ID. I urge you to heed their call by supporting LD 1138.

Thank you.