



Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

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February 26, 2007

The Honorable Tom Allen
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Allen:

On behalf of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), the nation's oldest, largest, and most diverse civil and human rights coalition, we write to express our strong support for your efforts to repeal the REAL ID Act of 2005. Repealing the law is one of LCCR's top legislative priorities in the 110th Congress.

Enacted with no hearings, with minimal debate, and rushed through Congress as part of an unrelated emergency appropriations measure, the REAL ID Act mandates drastic and expensive changes to the manner in which states produce drivers' licenses and other forms of ID. Because state ID cards that fail to comply with the law's requirements by May 2008 will no longer be accepted for any "official purpose" by any federal agency – including by the TSA at commercial airport security checkpoints, as well as in federal facilities such as courthouses and office buildings – the REAL ID Act will soon have a drastic impact on virtually every single American who drives or flies.

We strongly opposed the REAL ID Act – and have, since its enactment, become even more convinced that it is completely unworkable – for the following reasons:

- Even without DHS regulations, the National Conference of State Legislatures and the National Governor's Association have estimated that it will cost *at least* \$11 billion to carry out the requirements of the law in the first five years. It is almost certain that these costs will mean drastically higher fees for drivers' licenses, tax increases, ballooning state deficits, or cuts in other critical state expenditures – not to mention drastically longer waits at DMV facilities.
- The law requires states to verify each document (birth certificate, utility bill, passport, etc.) that drivers' license applicants use to prove their identity, with the agency that issued it. Less than 15 months before the deadline for compliance, states still do not have any helpful standards for what counts as adequate "verification," any uniform system for obtaining it, or any way to compel assistance from uncooperative agencies.
- The law requires states to determine the citizenship or immigration status of every applicant for an ID card. Yet states do not have the infrastructure to get this information, and state DMV employees simply do not have the expertise in immigration law – a subject that rivals tax law in its complexity – to interpret it in a fair and accurate manner.

"Equality In a Free, Plural, Democratic Society"

Hubert H. Humphrey Civil Rights Award Dinner • May 10, 2007

