



# Gov. Brad Little Urges Idahoans To Get Their Star Cards

James Dawson

October 2, 2019

In one year, Idahoans without an enhanced form of their state driver's license or a passport won't be able to board a plane, enter federal buildings or be allowed on military bases.

Just 15% of Idaho's 1.25 million licensed drivers have a Star Card as of Sept. 30. The Idaho Transportation Department has kicked off a media blitz to raise awareness of the issue that has included radio and television ads, as well as a seven-county tour across the state.

Gov. Brad Little (R) has starred in TV ads urging people to get the Star Card, Idaho's version of the federally compliant ID. But when he was in the state senate in 2008, he voted to block implementation of the REAL ID Act Congress had passed three years earlier over cost and privacy concerns.

The state law at the time, in part, said the REAL ID Act "is inimical to the security and well-being of the people of Idaho, will cause unneeded expense and inconvenience to those people and was adopted by the U.S. Congress in violation of the principles of federalism contained in the 10th amendment to the constitution of the United States."

In 2016, the Idaho legislature passed an update to come into compliance with the federal law. Little says his concerns have largely been addressed.

"This is important for people to be safe traveling anywhere in the world, but the cost of it was outrageous at that point in time and now we have our costs under control. We just gotta get people to get that star on their card," he said.

Congress passed the REAL ID Act in 2005 out of a recommendation from the 9/11 Commission to set standards for identification sources as a way to help prevent terrorism.

Requirements for a Star Card are much more stringent than a standard driver's license. People will need to show multiple documents to prove their identity that include combinations of things like a valid passport, a current driver's license, a Social Security card, birth certificate and utility bills.

These documents are scanned and stored in government databases. Digital copies are retained for at least 10 years. These databases are then shared with other state DMVs across the country.

Because of such storage issues, organizations from across the political spectrum, like the American Civil Liberties Union and the Cato Institute, have fought the law's implementation.

“Allowing government agencies to capture digital images of our passports, birth certificates, Social Security cards, and other primary source documents creates a one-stop shop for identity thieves and critically jeopardizes the privacy rights of Idahoans,” the ACLU of Idaho wrote in 2016. “We are living in a time when hackers [are] capable of breaking into multi-national companies’ and retailers’ databanks.”

With less than a year to go until the REAL ID Act is enforced at airports, federal courthouses and secured facilities across the country, some Idaho sheriff offices, like those in Ada and Canyon counties, are still dealing with significant wait times.

Actually, Gov. Little has yet to switch from a standard driver’s license due to this crunch.

“I went to get my Star ID in Emmett and there were a bunch of Ada County guys that had the office plugged up,” he said, promising to get one well before the October 2020 deadline.

An Idaho Transportation Department spokeswoman said such delays are not related to software outages that forced these offices to close for several days last summer. Instead, she said it’s related to population growth.

Appointments to renew a driver’s license in Ada County appear to be unavailable through the end of the year, according to an online scheduling portal. An Ada County Sheriff’s Office spokesman didn’t return a call for comment.