

## Blame It On The Feds

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Once you retire, it's harder to find excuses to put off unpleasant chores. So, on a rainy Monday morning, I gritted my teeth and set off for the Department of Revenue license bureau to apply for my Real ID. I'd need to have one to board a plane starting Oct. 1, and I wanted to beat the rush.

I didn't. It was standing room only in the waiting room, and practically everybody was there for Real ID. (It was a typical St. Louis crowd, good-humored and chatty.) I took a number and settled down to wait all morning.

After 20 minutes or so, a clerk came out and announced some document standards that I had somehow overlooked on the website. A 1099 had to have your full social security number on it. If you lived in an apartment, any document you hoped to prove your address with had to have the apartment number. There was more fine print, and a lot of people left, realizing the papers they'd brought wouldn't pass muster.

So I got to sit down and only had to wait an hour before being called into the inner sanctum, where there was a sign on the wall warning me against the consequences of irrational or hostile behavior. The clerks were pretty frayed. They said they hadn't made the rules, nor had their bosses in Jefferson City. It was the Feds we should be mad at.

I wasn't mad, because I'd brought a lot of alternative documents, and enough of them passed the stringent requirements. I paid my \$27 and got my Real ID.

If you're still putting off getting yours, don't feel bad. The government has been procrastinating, too. The 9/11 Commission recommended that Washington should set ID standards, and the Real ID act was passed in 2005. The enforcement deadline was in 2008. But it kept being pushed back.

Members of Congress made numerous attempts to amend or repeal the act. Both Republicans and Democrats opposed it for privacy reasons. It created a "national ID" or "internal passport," which many considered un-American.

Many states were against it, too, and not just because Washington was imposing a lot of extra expense and work on them. Each state had to agree to share its DMV database with all other states. Fifty states asked for an extension to the 2008 deadline, and 32 resisted until 2016.

The Feds eventually muscled the states into line, but the public remains obdurate or ignorant. Pollsters estimate that more than half of Americans don't even know about the Oct. 1 deadline.

The U.S. Travel Association says it's worried that airlines and hotels are going to lose a lot of business because their customers can't get past TSA checkpoints. The TSA itself made an alarming announcement that as many as one million passengers wouldn't make it to their planes on Oct. 1.

We can expect the drumbeat to get louder as the deadline nears. Some state DMVs have already announced longer hours and are holding special registration events at airports.

"People want it their way but they can't always get it," said the clerk who processed my documents. "It's the law." Is there any way to avoid applying for a Real ID?

It might seem so. With your old driver's license, you can keep on driving, and if you have a passport, you can get past the TSA. (If you don't have one, though, remember that a passport is much more expensive than a Real ID.) But there are complicating factors.

The Department of Homeland Security says you will need real ID to enter restricted Federal facilities, like its Washington office. Well, who wants to go there? But other restricted areas are military bases and nuclear power plants. That may be no problem for you. The list could get longer, though.

My sources disagreed on what else you may need a Real ID to do. Pundits on both the left and right suspect that once Washington has established a national ID, its required uses will inevitably multiply. You'll need it to enter a Federal courthouse or Social Security office. To board a train or bus. The conservative Cato Institute predicts that it will be required to pick up a prescription or buy guns and ammo. People without Real ID may find that a new line has been drawn and now they're "undocumented individuals" — a frightening classification in Trump's America.

Some resisters are looking to Trump to save them. He likes the Real ID Act, because its other sections allow him to sweep aside regulations that hinder his border wall. But election day is only a month after the deadline, and some pundits predict he will postpone it to win more votes. Real ID will be a formidable barrier to immigrants, however, so I wouldn't count on Trump, if he wins, to put off enforcement for long.