

THE ADVOCATE

Doubting Real ID is not ‘fringe’

Jim Harper

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In its March 25 opinion piece on Real ID, The Advocate states that Louisiana’s opposition to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s national ID program was the product of “anti-government conspiracy theories” advocated by “fringe groups.”

Opposition to Real ID has been advocated by groups from across the political spectrum, ranging from the American Civil Liberties Union and La Raza to the Electronic Frontier Foundation and my own organization, The Cato Institute. Several state legislatures, including Louisiana’s, have passed legislation and resolutions opposing Real ID. Gov. John Bel Edwards and 71 other Louisiana state representatives were not on the “fringe” when they voted for House Bill 715, the anti-Real ID bill in 2008.

State Sen. Yvonne Dorsey Colomb’s legislation to join Louisiana to the national ID system will weaken Louisiana drivers’ privacy and security. It will force the state to share driver data and scanned copies of documents such as birth certificates with departments of motor vehicles nationwide.

If and when every American carries a driver’s license with identical data fields in the machine-readable zone on the back of the card, that card will be demanded more and more often and scanned when we use credit cards, enter office buildings, visit the doctor or pick up prescriptions, and many other points at which governments and corporations would like to observe and track us.

Having doubts about the security issues around Real ID and the surveillance it could facilitate is not “fringe.” Indeed, it is entirely mainstream.

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