



If Oklahoma legislators will cave to Real ID, they'll cave to anything

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March 9, 2016

In an act of spectacular pusillanimity, Oklahoma legislators have taken steps to implement the privacy-destroying, \$13-million Real ID Act right here in the Sooner State. On Feb. 24, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted 28-7 to bring Oklahoma licenses into compliance with Real ID standards, we now only have to wait for the Senate to make a decision.

The author of the bill, David Holt, included a provision that allows for Oklahoma citizens to make a choice of whether they want a Real ID card or not. If not, they will still have to get passport to fly.

But, understanding that a camel will eventually be all the way in the tent, one has to wonder how long this “option” will last. Some form of incentive will be used to herd Oklahomans into Real ID compliance, something stronger than requiring a passport for domestic flights.

If the threat of requiring passports on domestic flights or upon entering a federal facility can bend a state government into supporting another federal scheme of privacy invasion, then we're in deep stuff. If this meager passport threat can compel our legislators to become complicit in the creation of a national ID card, the information from which will be stored in a national database, accessible to all other states and God knows who else, then there is nothing that our state government will not capitulate on if the penalty is a minor hiccup in relations between themselves and DC.

Real ID was attached to a “must-pass” defense bill in 2005, effectively guaranteeing passage in secret with no debate. It was a hysterical overreaction to the threats facing this country immediately following the 9/11 attacks, it was a direct product of that fog of paranoia.

Rather than treating it as such, The Department of Homeland Security has steamrolled ahead with implementation, in the face of a revolt from many states, and threatened to require passports for domestic flights. Well, many states, including Oklahoma, have broken like reeds in a light breeze to that ultimatum and are busy working towards compliance with DC's demands.

The *Cato Institute's* Jim Harper had an excellent op-ed in *The Oklahoman* on Feb. 19, explaining the dangers of REAL ID:

"In the name of security, the REAL ID Act sets up a system to help the government track everyone, law-abiding American citizens included."

"Full implementation of REAL ID would mean that all states put data in the same machine-readable formats on their driver's licenses and IDs. It also would mean that data about every driver and ID card holder in Oklahoma is available to every other state through a database network set up and controlled by the federal government. DHS officials are quick to deny that a uniform card system and a database network is a national ID system, but their arguments are unconvincing."

Much to the chagrin of every authoritarian since the Dawn of Man, there is no trade-off between liberty and security. Liberty is what keeps us safe, not some national database housing all our personal information.

Bureaucracies don't keep us safe, privacy does, and safe not only from "terrorism," but from bureaucratic mishandling of our information, or letting it slip into the wrong hands. The massive Surveillance State that has arisen since 9/11 hasn't prevented a single terrorist attack, but we are constantly warned that if we don't give up more privacy, the terrorists will win.

How can anyone believe that anymore? The War on Terror became a Golden Goose for many federal and state agencies, a gold mine that they don't want to give up.

And governments always want unrestricted access to their citizens' information. The battle between Apple and the FBI is a perfect example.

Encryption is a privacy tool that government can't wriggle past, and it's infuriating to them. It's urgently necessary for Apple to win this fight, but it only can if an effective case is made that encryption keeps us far safer than a bureaucratic backdoor to our private lives ever could.

The debate over Real ID, surveillance, all the liberty-undermining legislation passed since 9/11, all of it hinges on whether government can actually make us safer. The truth is that it can't, we are soft targets, and short of creating prison society, we will never be completely safe.

Realizing this, that privacy and liberty keep us far more secure than government ever could, should lead to ineffective programs like Real ID being tossed in the legislative dust bin. Only time will tell if our elected leaders will have the backbone to see it through.