

DAILY INTER LAKE

Bullock right to fight Real ID

Jim Harper

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Your editorial's appeal for care in the fight against the federal REAL ID Act is thoughtful and well-intended ("Real ID battle must be waged smartly"), but the best strategy is to be loud and uncompromising in opposing the national ID law. Gov. Bullock is doing it right.

The REAL ID Act is a federal effort to force uniform standards for drivers' licenses on to states. Compliant states will produce ID cards and licenses that can be easily scanned nationwide, and they will have to share driver data across a national network of databases controlled by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

After years being beaten back by the states — the original compliance deadline was in May 2008 — the DHS has moved to a divide-and-conquer strategy. DHS bureaucrats are going state-by-state to threaten elected officials with the prospect that their licenses and IDs will be refused at military bases and TSA checkpoints.

On their own, each state feels vulnerable to federal bullying. But by vocally insisting on Montana's power to run its own affairs, Gov. Bullock is signaling to other state leaders that they can hold fast and once again turn back the DHS, as they have done many times before.

Driver licensing policy is not the business of the federal government, and the effort to construct a national ID system runs contrary to the freedoms that make America great. The governor should advertise Montana's well-founded opposition to REAL ID as loudly as he can.

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