



## State has real concerns about Real ID

By Mark Fitton

Feb. 23, 2015

SPRINGFIELD —Illinoisans presenting their driver's licenses at the airport may face more hassles on the concourse.

That's because the Prairie State's driver's licenses don't meet the guidelines for federally accepted IDs.

Illinois is one of 21 states that has been operating under waivers that delay certain requirements of the Real ID Act, which was passed in 2005.

The act establishes the minimum requirements a state driver's license or other ID must meet before it will be recognized for federal purposes, such as requirements of the Transportation Security Administration.

Real ID is intended to improve the reliability and accuracy of state-issued identification documents, which should inhibit terrorists' ability to evade detection by using fraudulent IDs, according to the Department of Homeland Security.

Illinois does have anti-forgery features built into its licenses and will be offering a new version in 2016.

But Illinois requirements for proof of residency are not as strict as the federal act requires. In particular, Illinois does not specifically require a birth certificate as proof of ID to obtain a driver's license.

Illinois Secretary of State spokesman Henry Haupt said there's been some mischaracterization of the airport issue when it comes to boarding airplanes in 2015 and 2016.

The Department of Homeland Security and Transportation Security Administration have said residents of non-compliant states will be able to fly, but they will be subject to additional security screenings.

Unfortunately, Haupt said, what those screenings will include has not been announced.

Illinoisans with a federally issued ID such as a passport or military ID could use that ID in lieu of their driver's licenses, he added.

Haupt said the Secretary of State's office will need two things from the Legislature if it is to issue Real ID-compliant driver's licenses: authorization and funding.

When Real ID first passed, Illinois officials estimated it might cost around \$100 million to implement here, Haupt said.

Now, with changes in technology and other developments, Haupt said that cost is lower but still expensive: an estimated \$20 million over four years.

And the feds aren't offering to help.

"Basically, it's an unfunded mandate," Haupt said.

The Illinois General Assembly, in fact, passed a 2007 resolution in opposition to Real ID.

Despite the federal government's stance to the contrary, critics say the Real ID act creates a national ID card and raises scary questions about individual liberty.

"It is a national ID card," said Ed Yohnka, spokesman for the ACLU in Illinois. "And the card itself doesn't actually do anything for security."

Instead, he said, governments began to impose mandatory use or swiping of the cards to allow access to, and therefore track, a whole range of activities. And, in doing so, the government builds networks of surveillance over ordinary citizens.

Jim Harper, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, concurred.

The government's control over a national card, such as the decision to grant or not grant one to an individual, would be the equivalent of allowing or disallowing someone access to society, he said.

"Noncompliance is the right answer and that's what's happening in most of the country," he said.

Harper said the states might indeed derail Real ID.

"When push has come to shove, every single time the TSA and DHS have backed down because the federal government would pay the political price if it started refusing to allow American to travel," he said.

"In truth, no state is fully compliant now, 10 years after the passage of the act," Harper said.

"And that's as it should be. America shouldn't have a national ID. After all, this is a free country."

State Sen. Lou Lang, D-Skokie, is not a fan of Real ID as it exists. He said the federal government has failed to listen to state concerns.

“I don’t want to be a part of any kind of action that restricts people from our state from moving around the country as free Americans ought to be able to do,” he said.