

July 9, 2009

## Indiana plans to overhaul how it handles driver's licenses

Privacy activists have objected to similar measures

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The BMV's plan to overhaul the way it renews licenses for millions of Hoosiers thrusts the state into a nationwide debate that pits national security against personal privacy.

Conforming to parts of a federal initiative known as the REAL ID Act, a 2005 anti-terrorism measure that seeks to standardize driver's licenses across the country, the changes represent a significant overhaul in the way the Bureau of Motor Vehicles will handle renewing the more than 5.5 million existing licenses and IDs and how it will distribute new ones.

The REAL ID Act has drawn the ire of immigration and privacy activists, lawyers groups and the American Civil Liberties Union, and it ran into opposition before it was even passed. In 2005, the American Bar Association sent a letter to the U.S. Senate urging lawmakers to oppose the measure.

Despite the opposition, BMV officials say the changes, which will take effect next year, are designed to boost security and prevent identity theft, which they called one of the fastest-growing crimes in the U.S. Driver's licenses can be a target for those criminals.

"This is why we have to check," BMV Commissioner Andy Miller said at a Downtown news conference Wednesday.

Dennis Rosebrough, spokesman for the BMV, stressed that Indiana is not implementing the REAL ID Act, but that the overhaul incorporates parts of the measure, along with recommendations from the 9/11 commission and other state and federal guidelines.

As for the most controversial piece of the REAL ID Act -- huge federal databases to store data from all states -- those are yet to be established, and Rosebrough said the BMV "will have to see about" linking into them in the future.

So far, 20 states have implemented similar standards as Indiana, while 11 states from Alaska to Maine have enacted laws effectively rejecting the federal standards.

The act mandates how states verify their residents' identities and distribute ID cards.

Some have likened the measure to a national ID card, which has fed into critics' complaints.

"It doesn't really help the country with much of anything," Jim Harper, director of information policy studies at the conservative Washington-based Cato Institute, said of a measure that requires native-born citizens to carry an ID card.

The act also has inspired unusual allies. The liberal group Center for American Progress and the Gun Owners of America both oppose it, along with a host of other organizations.

"We're concerned about the invasion of privacy that this scheme represents," said Larry Pratt, executive director of the Gun Owners of America. "We don't want that information being used by agencies of government in any way hostile."

Washington has responded to the criticism.

Congress and President Barack Obama are mulling changes to the act, and there is legislation in Congress known as the PASS ID Act that has garnered the support of the National Governors Association, a group that initially opposed the REAL ID Act.

But John Broyles, attorney at Broyles, Kight and Ricafort, said that with the new regulations, he's concerned that problems will only get worse. Broyles pointed to legal immigrants already being turned away because BMV branch workers think they're here illegally.

"We have literally thousands and thousands of legal immigrants in this state," he said. "I want to make sure that (the BMV's) doing it the right way."

## Additional Facts

What you'll need

- » **Affirm your identity:** A birth certificate or U.S. passport.
  - » **Verify Social Security number:** A Social Security card, W-2 form or pay stub.
  - » **Establish lawful status:** A birth certificate or U.S. passport.
  - » **Confirm your address:** A bank statement, a computer-generated bill or a pay stub.
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