

# The Washington Post

## The dangers of a national ID card

By: Jim Harper – February 7, 2013

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The Feb. 3 editorial calling for a national ID card “with effective safeguards for privacy and against government prying” fails to address the most important question. One only has to look at the history of the Social Security number to know that there is no effective safeguard against government identification protocols being put to an ever-growing array of uses.

To find concerns with a national identification system “hollow,” the editorial board ignored important lessons of history. The uses made of the Rwandan ID card, apartheid South Africa’s internal passport, the Soviet propiska and other national ID systems in the past century are not hollow examples. Indeed, they are more flesh-and-blood than many people would like to consider.

Our recent history doesn’t suggest that national ID cards would be put to the worst of uses, but the future is uncertain. An important part of maintaining our essential freedom in this nation is declining to build the technical and social systems that could be freedom’s undoing. Even if federal background checks controlling immigration could be perfected, seeing such a system expanded to monitor and control U.S. citizens is not a price worth paying.