The Barr Code (http://blogs.ajc.com/bob-barr-blog)

"E-Verify" Is A Stealth National ID

5:00 am June 10, 2011, by Bob Barr

For years, politicians have been preying on the American people's fears of terrorism and the hysteria over illegal immigration, to push for a national ID. Concerns with government snooping and citizen privacy have taken a back seat to these efforts.

Now, they're at it again.

In the late 1990s a national identification provision was included in an illegal immigration "reform" bill; it was later repealed. Then, in 2005, the Republican-controlled Congress passed the REAL ID Act as part of an "emergency" supplemental military spending bill. Stuck into this spending measure was a provision mandating a uniform set of driver licensing requirements for states to implement. States were required to provide the information for a database that other states could access.

As a stand-alone bill, the REAL ID Act was unable to gain much traction in the Senate; despite passing the House by a comfortable margin. But after Sen. John Kerry (D-MA) was famously criticized in 2004 by the Bush campaign for not supporting troop funding, no member of the Senate dared oppose the legislation.

Thankfully, because the REAL ID law constituted an unfunded mandate from Washington, more than 20 states have refused to implement its provisions – a form of nullification. The federal government, desperate to gain effective control over state driver's licensing procedures and information, however, has kept pressing the issue. Legislation, known as PASS ID, was introduced to sooth some of the states' concerns; but its window-dressing could not disguise the fact that it, too, constitutes a de facto national ID card.

This bad idea has stuck around Washington despite being thoroughly rebuked by many states.

Jim Harper, director of information policy studies at the Cato Institute, has identified several criteria necessary for a program to constitute a national ID. Obviously, federal standards would be applied in this instance; as would a requirement that it carried at all times, which is why Congress has attached the standards to driver's licenses.

The final requirement, as noted by Harper, is that it be used for identification. This would mean that the ID card or driver's license would contain some sort of biometric identifier; such as facial recognition. Both REAL ID and PASS ID met these criteria.

The latest stealth attack by the feds to implement a de facto national identification system, however, lurks in the E-Verify program, designed to "assist" employers in determining the work eligibility of a prospective employee. This program was designed to help prevent illegal aliens from obtaining employment in the United States.

Members of Congress are pushing to have the E-Verify program mandated in all 50 states. As explained by Harper, employers would not be allowed to opt-out of this "cardless" national ID system.

"[N]ot having data in the E-Verify databases means not having legal work, so 'participation' in E-Verify can be

fairly called practically required. Second, try to opt out of the system and you will meet a dead end," Harper wrote at the Cato Institute's blog earlier this month. He added that E-Verify is "legally required if the state or federal governments have got your identity data."

In addition to verifying Social Security numbers of prospective hires, E-Verify would meet the final requirement for a de facto national identification system, by allowing the federal government to gain access to state databases; ostensibly allowing access to other identifiers, including the photo on your state-issued driver's license.

There are other potentially troublesome consequences if this federal program is expanded. As Harper notes, "E-Verify can be put to use in regulating access to health care and housing, in gun control and registration, in monitoring travel and lodging – the list goes on and on."

Washington simply will not rest until it has a mandated national identification system in place. It is up to the citizens of the several states to stop this insidious scheme.

By Bob Barr – The Barr Code

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