

SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2008

## States rebel - Concerns about Real ID Act turn into Boston Tea Party



### States rebel Concerns about Real ID Act turn into Boston Tea Party

By [JULIE DELCOUR](#) Associate Editor

[3/30/2008](#)

The Real ID Act is in real trouble. If the 2005 law were tea it would be floating in the Boston Harbor, dumped there by defiant states revolting against an onerous and unfunded mandate that slipped through Congress in response to the 9/11 attacks.

Real ID requires states to adopt uniform and costly federal standards for driver's licenses. Souped up cards would include a photograph, thumb print and other personal data. States must link their record-keeping systems to national databases so duplicate applications can be detected, illegal immigrants identified and driving histories shared.

States also would have to verify the identity of 245 million drivers and digitally store verification documents.

The price tag for implementation is almost \$4 billion over 10 years. So far, the Department of Homeland Security is promising about \$360 million in grants to make the transition. Federal officials, however, have appropriated only \$90 million and distributed only \$6 million.

Oklahoma, along with at least 47 other states, received additional time to comply with the law set to begin May 11. That date later was pushed back to Dec. 31, 2009. But even with that states were required to get a compliance extension. Minus extensions, state residents would have had difficulty boarding commercial airplanes and entering federal buildings without the proper identification.

**“It’s important to note that the request for an extension does not include a promise that Oklahoma will ultimately comply with the act,” Paul Sund, Gov. Brad Henry’s communications spokesman, said earlier this month.**

Henry agreed to the extension, granted Feb. 15, to protect Oklahomans from federal sanctions that would have created personal and economic hardships.

Last year, the Legislature registered an official protest of the law by passing SB 464. The fight over the Real ID Act is far from over, and protesting states finally may get some help.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., didn’t like the act to begin with but was outmaneuvered by GOP colleagues three years ago who argued the law would stop terrorists from taking advantage of loose identification laws.

Now Alexander, chairman of the Senate Republican Conference, has several more arrows in his quiver. He has the support of Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin, D-Ill., who, like most Democrats, wants to repeal the law. Alexander, a former governor, has state legislatures and governors behind him. The National Association of State Legislatures is on record calling for repeal.

This week Alexander plans to file an amendment to the fiscal 2009 homeland security appropriations bill that would halt the program until the government finds a way to reimburse states for its cost.

“The federal government shouldn’t be able to enforce the Real ID law unless the federal government pays for it,” Alexander told The Hill, a legislative publication. “It wasn’t properly considered in the Senate, it creates a national identification card, and it’s a massive unfunded mandate.”

At this point what Congress should do is give the Real ID Act the hearings it never received prior to passage because the bill was appended to emergency funding legislation.

Concerns over national security, privacy rights and cost should be aired and debated.

Only after that process will Congress be ready to decide if the country needs a national identification card, something Americans have resisted for 232 years.

Julie DelCour, 581-8379

[julie.delcour@tulsaworld.com](mailto:julie.delcour@tulsaworld.com)