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## 34 States Align Against National I.D. Card

A revolt against a national driver's license, begun in Maine last month, is quickly spreading to other states.

The Maine Legislature on Jan. 26 overwhelmingly passed a resolution objecting to the Real ID Act of 2005. The federal law sets a national standard for driver's licenses and requires states to link their record-keeping systems to national databases.

Within a week of Maine's action, lawmakers in Georgia, Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico, Vermont and Washington state also balked at Real ID. They are expected soon to pass laws or adopt resolutions declining to participate in the federal identification network.

"It's the whole privacy thing," said Matt Sundeen, a transportation analyst for the National Conference of State Legislatures. "A lot of legislators are concerned about privacy issues and the cost. It's an estimated \$11 billion implementation cost."

The law's supporters say it is needed to prevent terrorists and illegal immigrants from getting fake identification cards.

States will have to comply by May 2008. If they do not, driver's licenses that fall short of Real ID's standards cannot be used to board an airplane or enter a federal building or open some bank accounts.

About a dozen states have active legislation against Real ID, including Arizona, Georgia, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Utah and Wyoming.

Missouri state Rep. James Guest, a Republican, formed a coalition of lawmakers from 34 states to file bills that oppose or protest Real ID.

"This is almost a frontal assault on the freedoms of America when they require us to carry a national ID to monitor where we are," Guest said in an interview Saturday. "That's going too far."

Guest proposed a resolution last week opposing Real ID and said he expects it quickly to pass the Legislature. "This does nothing to stop terrorism," he said. "Don't burden the American people with this requirement to carry this ID."

Though most states oppose the law, some such as Indiana and Maryland are looking to comply with Real ID, Sundeen said.

The issue may be moot for states if Congress takes action.

Republican Sen. John Sununu of New Hampshire, along with Democratic Sen. Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, filed a bill last year to repeal the law. Sununu expects similar legislation will be introduced soon.

"The federal government should not be in charge of defining and issuing drivers' licenses," Sununu said in a statement.

Privacy advocates say a national driver's license will promote identity theft.

Barry Steinhardt, a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, said the Real ID ordered by Congress would require a digital photo and probably a fingerprint on each driver's license or state-issued ID card. That, he said, will make it more valuable to identity thieves because the ID card will be accepted as much more than a driving credential.

"It's going to be a honey pot out there that's going to be irresistible to identity thieves," Steinhardt said.

An identity thief, he said, could buy a Real ID from a rogue motor vehicle department employee with his own photo and fingerprint on it.

The victim is never going to be able to undo this," Steinhardt said.

Other criticisms include:

- Some states will have to invest millions in new computer systems that can communicate with federal databases. That is something they probably will not accomplish by the deadline.
- It will be difficult to comply with the requirement that license applicants prove they are in the country legally. There are more than 100 different immigration statutes, Steinhardt said, which will pose problems for motor vehicle clerks unfamiliar with immigration law.
- It does not solve the problem of terrorism. Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh and some of the hijackers from the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, had legitimate driver's licenses.
- Even the requirement that applicants' full legal names appear on licenses will pose problems because some states limit the number of characters on the face of the card.

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