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Schweitzer signs law rejecting federal IDs
By ALAN SUDERMAN of the Associated Press

HELENA - Gov. Brian Schweitzer said "no, nope, no way, hell no" Tuesday to national driver's licenses, signing into law a bill supporters say is one of the strongest rejections to date of the federal plan.

The bill rejects the Real ID Act in Montana, a federal law that sets a national standard for driver's licenses and requires states to link their record-keeping systems to national databases.

Though several states have either passed or are considering resolutions or bills against the act, Montana's is the first state to outright deny its implementation, according to the American Civil Liberties Union.

"This is the first one saying, 'We're not doing it,' " said Scott Crichton of the Montana ACLU.

The law says that the federally approved identification cards eventually would be necessary to board airplanes or enter federal buildings.

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"We also don't think that bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., ought to tell us that if we're going to get on a plane we have to carry their card, so when it's scanned through they know where you went, when you got there and when you came home," Schweitzer said.

"This is still a free country and there are no freer people than the people that we have in Montana."

The federal government has never been popular with Montanans. The federal Patriot Act was a common whipping boy on the campaign trail last year, and lawmakers from both sides of the aisle lined up this year against the Real ID Act.

Montana's lawmakers had two bills opposing to the Real ID Act to consider this session: one "opposing" it, another to "nullify" it.

The one opposing the act, sponsored by Rep. Brady Wiseman, D-Bozeman, and signed by the governor, was unanimously approved by both chambers, while the other bill was seen as unconstitutional and was rejected by the Senate.

Wiseman said getting support for his bill was an easy sale.

"Nobody in Montana thinks we should have this thing, so it became easy. There was never an argument and I never had to persuade anybody," he said.

He added that he's been urging members of the state's congressional delegation to support efforts to repeal the Real ID Act.

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 Rehberg said he originally supported the act because it was recommended by the Sept. 11 commission as a way to strengthen national security, and he thought it was what most Montanans wanted.

"The Legislature has disagreed, the governor has disagreed and I will accept and support their position," Rehberg said.

Wiseman's bill is House Bill 287.

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