



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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White Taps Inspector General To Lead Implementation of REAL ID Act

Secretary of State Jesse White appointed his Inspector General Jim Burns to chair a committee that will recommend changes Illinois should make to comply with a new federal law that orders every state to require, verify and store specific identification documents before issuing drivers' licenses.

"The REAL ID Act requires every state to adopt minimum standards for drivers' licenses and identification cards to improve security," White said. "I have asked my Inspector General, Jim Burns, to provide our state with a blueprint to comply with this law in a way that ensures we have the most secure driver's license possible."

Although Illinois already meets many of the identification and security requirements, the Secretary of State's office will need to make some procedural and legislative changes to comply with various components of the law. Those changes include verifying all identification documents presented by applicants with the original issuing agencies and then scanning and storing the documents electronically.

States were given three years to comply with the REAL ID Act, which was signed into law May 11. Drivers' licenses from states that do not meet the new federal standards by the deadline could not be used for federal purposes, such as boarding an airplane or entering certain federal buildings.

Federal rules that have yet to be released will shed more light on certain aspects of the law and help states get a better handle on the total operational impact and cost. For instance the law isn't clear as to how states will have to verify identification documents with issuing agencies. Because there isn't currently a network in place to verify birth certificates with every county or jurisdiction that issues them, they may have to be checked manually before drivers' licenses could be issued. It's also unclear at this point if current drivers would be subject to all the new identification requirements.

Although states face many logistical hurdles to implement the changes, the biggest obstacle may be the cost. White said it's too early to put a price tag on Illinois' changes, but he said the federal government should reimburse states for their expenses.

"This is a costly mandate that the federal government has placed on the states," White said. "I will be lobbying for federal funding to help make these changes. Although Illinois may be ahead of other states in compliance due to our strict identification requirements and the technology we employ to fight fraud, there are still costly changes to our program that will have to be administered."

"The REAL ID Act is a recognition that drivers' licenses have become the most commonly used form of identification in the United States and therefore a top target for fraud," Burns said. "While it may not be a perfect law, it certainly forces every state to make a determined effort to eliminate any vulnerabilities."

The following is a summary of the specific requirements of the REAL ID Act:

- Information Required to Be Displayed: States include at a minimum the following information and features on the driver's license and identification card: full legal name; date of birth; gender; driver's license or identification card number; a digital photograph; address of principal residence; signature; physical security features designed to prevent tampering, counterfeiting, or duplication of the document for fraudulent purposes; and a common machine-readable technology, with defined minimum data elements.
- Identification Requirements: States require, at minimum, presentation and verification of the following information before issuing a driver's license or identification card to an individual: a photo identity document; documentation showing date of birth; proof of the person's social security number; and documentation showing the person's name and address of principal residence.
- Immigration Requirements: States shall require, before issuing a driver's license or identification card to a person, valid documentary evidence that an individual is a citizen of the United States; an alien lawfully admitted for permanent or temporary residence; has conditional permanent resident status; has a valid, unexpired nonimmigrant visa or nonimmigrant visa status for entry; has a pending or approved application for asylum; has refugee status; has a pending or approved application for temporary protected status; has approved deferred action status; or has a pending application for adjustment of status to that of an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence or conditional permanent resident status.
- Temporary Licenses: States may only issue a temporary driver's license or identification card to applicants who present evidence of legal status. A temporary driver's license or identification can only be valid for the period of time of the applicant's authorized stay in the United States or for a period of one year if there is no definite end to the period of authorized stay.
- Verification of Documents: Before issuing a driver's license or ID card to a person, a state shall verify, with the issuing agency, the issuance, validity, and completeness of each breeder document required to be presented by the applicant.
- Data Retention and Storage: States must capture images of identity source documents and retain electronic copies for a minimum of 10 years or paper copies for seven years.
- Fraud Prevention and Security Standards: States must subject each person applying for a driver's license or ID card to mandatory facial image capture. States must subject all staff that manufacture or produce drivers' licenses and identification cards to security clearance and establish fraudulent document training programs for staff.

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