



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

March 3, 2011

2011-R-0103

OLR BACKGROUNDER: REAL ID IMPLEMENTATION IN CONNECTICUT

By: Paul Frisman, Principal Analyst

What is the Real ID Act?

The Real ID Act (Public Law 109-13) is a federal law requiring state drivers' licenses and non-driver identification (ID) cards to meet certain standards to be accepted for federal purposes, such as boarding airplanes and entering certain federal buildings. Congress passed the act in 2005 to better verify critical identity documents after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. People who do not have licenses or ID cards that meet these federal standards ("federally compliant") will still be able to travel by air and enter federal buildings, but will find it harder to do so.

The act's requirements will affect all 2.9 million people who hold Connecticut licenses or non-driver ID cards because their licenses and ID cards must be renewed during the next six years.

On March 4, 2011, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) extended the deadline for states to comply with Real ID from May 11, 2011 to January 15, 2013. The deadline for completing the issuance of the federally compliant licenses and ID cards remains December 1, 2017.

The state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has notified DHS that it plans to begin issuing federally compliant licenses and ID cards starting October 4, 2011 so it can meet the 2017 deadline.

When Does the Act Affect Individual License and ID Card Holders?

Current Connecticut licenses and ID cards are now considered valid and acceptable for all federal purposes. Starting October 4, 2011, however, anyone seeking to renew his or her license or ID card must present an original birth certificate, valid passport, and other identifying documents to DMV. (Those applying for their first licenses or ID cards must already provide these documents.)

What Happens to People Who Do Not Have Compliant Licenses and ID Cards?

If a renewing license or card holder wishes, he or she can get a non-compliant license or ID card and skip the re-verification of his or her identity and legal presence in the U.S. These individuals may have a shorter transaction time renewing their license or ID card at DMV. DMV also will issue non-compliant licenses and ID cards to non-citizens legally in the U.S. for less than the four- or six-year terms of driver's licenses and non-driver ID cards.

Both the compliant and non-compliant license and ID cards will be valid for most transactions for which people need an identity card. But only holders of compliant licenses and cards will be able to use them to identify themselves when traveling by air or entering certain secure federal buildings and installations. Travelers with non-compliant cards will face additional screening at these locations.

Compliant and non-compliant licenses and cards will be visibly different. Compliant credentials will have a gold star in the upper right corner. Non-compliant credentials will have the phrase "Not for Federal Identification" in their upper margin.

What Kinds of Documents Are Needed to Renew Licenses and ID Cards?

When license and card holders renew their licenses and ID cards they must provide DMV with the same type of information they provided when they got their original license or card. This information need only be provided when first obtaining or renewing a license after the Real ID Act takes effect. DMV estimates it will handle about 33,000 renewals in each month of the six-year cycle needed to renew existing cards and licenses.

According to DMV, the documents people need for compliant licenses and ID cards must include either (1) an original birth certificate or (2) a valid passport. (If the passport was issued by a foreign government, it must show evidence of legal entry into the U.S.) An individual providing both these documents does not have to provide any other form of identification.

However, if an individual can provide only a birth certificate or a passport, but not both, then he or she also must provide another form of identification. These secondary forms of identification include social security cards, temporary resident cards, certificates of citizenship, military IDs, and similar documents (Conn. Agency Regs. § 14-137-67). The full list of documents can be found on DMV's website at: <http://www.ct.gov/dmv/cwp/view.asp?a=805&Q=244772&dmvPNavCtr=|28089|#28090>.

License or ID card holders who have changed their names because of marriage, divorce, adoption, or civil union must also present DMV with documentation of those changes.

Real ID requires that DMV verify the validity of many of these documents with the issuing agency before issuing a license or ID card.

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