



Written by [Ron Paul](#) on April 24, 2025

REAL ID: Phony Security, Real Authoritarianism

Those who hoped the second Trump Administration would reject big spending, war, and restrictions on liberty continue to be disappointed. A new disappointment came when Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced her department would in May begin enforcing the REAL ID law.

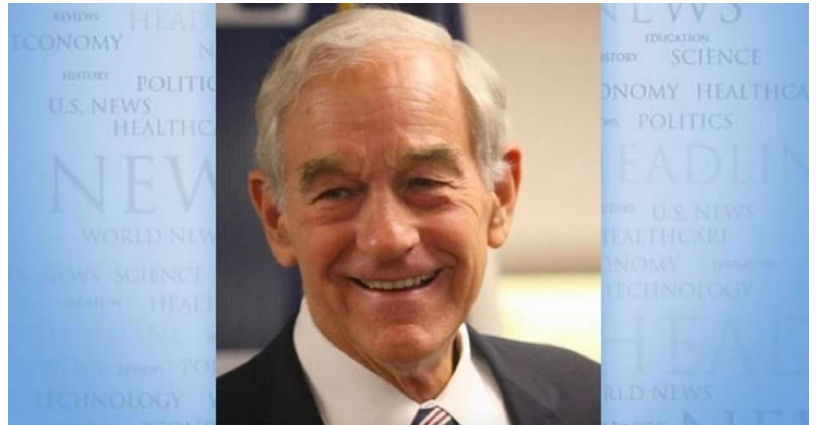
Passed in 2005, the REAL ID Act created federal standards for driver's licenses. The law requires everyone applying for a driver's license to provide the DMV with his social security number, proof of legal residence, and two proofs of his home address. The REAL ID Act allows the Homeland Security Department to mandate, as it sees fit, the including of additional items in the related government database, including "biometric" identifiers. Biometric identifiers include personal data such as retina scans, fingerprints, and DNA.

People who doubt that this database will be used to violate the rights of US citizens should ask what a present-day J. Edgar Hoover — a former FBI director who was notorious for collecting private information on politicians and other prominent individuals — would do with a database containing personal and even biometric information on American citizens. They should also consider the IRS's history of targeting presidents' political opponents. Americans also have the threat of violations of their rights by hackers. The government has a poor track record of protecting data of US citizens.

REAL ID's supporters deny the law turns state driver's licenses into national ID cards because states have no mandate to implement REAL ID. However, citizens of any state that refuses to adopt REAL ID will be unable to use their state-issued IDs for boarding an airplane or riding on a train.

Once the initial uses of REAL ID are established, the government will then require REAL ID for other activities. For instance, local transportation authorities may be offered federal funds to implement REAL ID requirements for public transportation. Several pro-Second Amendment organizations oppose REAL ID because it could be used to monitor gun owners. There is nothing in the law prohibiting a future progressive Homeland Security secretary from requiring REAL ID for a firearms purchase. Imposing a REAL ID mandate on gun ownership would further the authoritarian objective of having a database containing the name and address of, and how many and what type of firearms are owned by, every law-abiding gun owner in the country.

REAL ID also menaces health freedom. One of the few victories for liberty during the Covid hysteria was the failure of "vaccine passport" schemes to be more widely imposed. These schemes attempted to forbid people from returning to their normal lives unless they proved they were "fully vaccinated"



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against Covid.

REAL ID was marketed as a weapon in the “war on terror.” However, Thomas Massie, the most consistent and courageous defender of liberty in the House of Representatives, pointed out that 9-11 hijackers used passports from their own countries. Rep. Massie wrote, “As long as the pilot’s door is locked and no one has weapons, why do you care that someone who flies has government permission?”

Like most post-9-11 security bills, REAL ID does nothing to protect the American people’s safety. It does, though, do much to endanger their liberty. REAL ID could even be the final piece of the transformation of America into a total surveillance society where government monitors, and thus controls, our actions. Americans who understand the danger must work to get the Trump administration to reverse its position.

Ron Paul is a former U.S. congressman from Texas. This [article](#) originally appeared at the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity and is reprinted here with permission.



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