



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on April 17, 2025

Trump Administration to Enforce REAL ID

For 20 years, the REAL ID law has been languishing in enforcement purgatory. But Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem recently announced that's about to change.

Anyone who wants to enter federal buildings, fly, or tour nuclear power plants will soon need a REAL ID. According to Noem, this is for our own good. She said:

Starting May 7, you will need a REAL ID to travel by air or to visit federal buildings in the United States. These IDs keep our country safe because they help prevent fraud and they enhance security. Please do your part to protect our country. Go today and don't delay.



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This is not what I supported!

Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves. – William Pitt the Younger

DHS Secretary Kristi Noem announces everyone will need a REAL ID to fly starting MAY 7.
pic.twitter.com/FB7r7QB4zs

— T (@Rifleman4WVU) [April 12, 2025](#)

Conservative Pushback

But many Americans aren't interested in "doing their part." Noem's announcement triggered significant pushback.

Former Representative Ron Paul (R-Texas) likened justification for the REAL ID to the erroneous justification Americans received about the Federal Reserve Bank. He laughingly pointing out how "they always twist" laws such as these to fool people into believing it's for their safety. He said advocates of the Federal Reserve justified that monstrosity by claiming it would prevent money counterfeiting. In reality, the point of the Fed was to establish a monopoly on currency. REAL ID, he said, is similar. It's designed to establish a government monopoly on control. Paul [signaled](#) that he was becoming disillusioned with the Trump administration:

I'm not very happy with the direction we're going right now. It looks like we're going to lose a lot more privacy if this bill is re-opened and made much worse. It looks like it can do a lot more damage yet to come.



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Representative Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) is also a vocal opponent. He [said](#) the REAL ID will not accomplish what the government claims it would:

Real ID isn't needed and won't stop terrorists from hijacking planes. Most of the 9/11 hijackers held Saudi, UAE, Egyptian, or Lebanese passports. Real ID is a national standard and database of IDs that is primarily a tool for control of Americans. Trump shouldn't enforce it.

Popular conservative YouTubers The Hodgetwins asked, "Why not delay it like past administrations did so you can hear from the people on it? Americans don't want a big government surveillance state."

The American Policy Center said the REAL ID "has many tentacles that are each very egregious." The group also believes this legislation could threaten Americans' gun rights:

You may wrongly believe the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security would never add purchasing a firearm and/or ammunition to the OFFICIAL PURPOSE of the Real ID Act 2005.... In fact, Democrats in California have already made a move in that direction. The attempt failed at the time because all States/Commonwealths were not yet certified as being Real ID compliant. In 2021, the Department of Homeland Security certified all States/Commonwealths as being Real ID compliant.

The Secretary of the DHS can require the seller of the firearm and/or ammunition to swipe the back of the Real ID compliant drivers' license and provide the information to the DHS.

ACLU Opposition

This law is so bad that it triggered a rare episode of clarity and dedication to values from the New York branch of the ACLU. The ACLU [warned](#) REAL ID would create the first national identification system in American history. It would also set federal standards for state driver's licenses and identification cards. That means it could be required to vote, go to a ball game, access Medicaid, or even get a gun (you read that right; the ACLU is suddenly worried about your gun rights). REAL ID requirements could also spill over into the private sector, says the ACLU. And it "could establish an enormous electronic infrastructure that government and law enforcement officials — or whoever else hacks in — could use to track Americans' activities and movements."

Papers, Please

Paul made similar arguments in 2005 before the bill passed. He [argued](#) on the House floor that the REAL ID would lead to the nationalization of all identification. "It will be the introduction of the notion that we will be carrying our papers." The REAL ID bill, Paul added, had no limitations. "There are minimum standards but no maximum limitations," meaning the government can add anything it wants, including a category for people who are in gun clubs.

He took the gun analogy further. While some advocates truly believe the REAL ID will make Americans safe, the argument is about as solid as the one that says gun registration will tell authorities which criminals have guns. He said, "So you're registering all the American people because you're looking for a terrorist — and all a terrorist is going to do is evade the law. But we, the American people, have to obey the law. If we don't, we go to prison."



REAL ID Origins

Congress passed the REAL ID in 2005 after it was recommended by the 9/11 Commission. Representative James Sensenbrenner (R-Wis.) sponsored the legislation. Sensenbrenner also authored the Patriot Act, which gave the federal government enormous latitude to legally spy on Americans.

The primary argument for the REAL ID was that it would strengthen national security by preventing terrorists from obtaining fake IDs. Sensenbrenner also touted it as a way to support law enforcement, a notion no patriotic American would ever oppose. And, according to the venerable 9/11 Commission, REAL ID would close the security gaps that allowed that terrible day to happen.

Security Failures

Some may find this last argument especially infuriating. There is credible evidence suggesting the U.S. national security apparatus had detailed information about 9/11 a year before it happened but, for whatever reason, didn't act on it. None other than former FBI director Louis Freeh pointed this out in a November 17, 2005 op-ed in *The Wall Street Journal* titled [“Why Did the 9/11 Commission Ignore ‘Able Danger’?”](#)

Able Danger was a military intelligence operation that, according to Freeh and at least one former high-ranking congressman, Curt Weldon, knew the would-be ringleader of the 9/11 attacks, Mohamed Atta, by name, possibly by face. Able Danger also knew Atta was operating in New York. It had identified three other 9/11 hijackers by mid-2000, according to the former FBI director. Yet, as Freeh pointed out, “the final 9/11 Commission report, released on July 22, 2004, concluded that ‘American intelligence agencies were unaware of Mr. Atta until the day of the attacks.’ This now looks to be embarrassingly wrong.”

So the people who came up with the REAL ID (for “national security” reasons) are the same ones who either lied about or were too inept to include in their report that intel to stop 9/11 existed.

This is reminiscent of arguments made for more gun restrictions and red flag laws after a shooting, while conveniently ignoring that the shooter was already on the FBI's radar.

John Birch Society Opposes REAL ID

This magazine, an affiliate of The John Birch Society, has written at length about the problems with REAL ID. Our article titled [“REAL ID Soon: Inescapable Extension of the Federal Surveillance State”](#) outlined one additional problem with this legislation while echoing those already mentioned.

The federal government has no authority to mandate national identification documents. “This federal overreach is such an obvious act of usurpation that all state legislators should stand shoulder-to-shoulder in their resistance to such despotic designs,” we noted. This point is rarely mentioned, but it's among the most important. The Founding Fathers and past generations would have never entertained such a statist idea. This is completely unacceptable in any country inhabited by people who pride themselves on being free.



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