



Press Office
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Press Release

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*****EMBARGOED UNTIL FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 3:45 PM EST*****

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY JEH C. JOHNSON ON THE FINAL PHASE OF REAL ID ACT IMPLEMENTATION

Today I announce the schedule for the final phase of implementation of the REAL ID Act. Bottom line up front: Effective January 22, 2018, air travelers with a driver's license or identification card issued by a state that does not meet the requirements of the REAL ID Act (unless that state has been granted an extension to comply with the Act) must present an alternative form of identification acceptable to TSA in order to board a commercial domestic flight. Over the next two years, those states that are not REAL ID compliant are strongly encouraged to meet the requirements of the law for the benefit of their residents.

In 2004, the 9/11 Commission recommended that the U.S. government set standards for the issuance of "sources of identification, such as driver's licenses." The Commission recognized that "[s]ources of identification are the last opportunity to ensure that people are who they say they are and to check whether they are terrorists."

In accordance with that recommendation, Congress enacted the REAL ID Act. This law prohibits federal agencies from accepting for official purposes driver's licenses and identification cards issued by states that do not meet the law's standards for secure issuance and production. The law charges the Department of Homeland Security with establishing minimum requirements for these standards. So, for a license or identification card to be REAL ID compliant, the state issuing it must, for example, incorporate anti-counterfeit technology into the card, verify the applicant's identity, and conduct background checks for employees involved in issuing driver's licenses.

The overall goal of the REAL ID Act passed by Congress is to prevent the fraudulent issuance and use of driver's licenses and identification cards, thereby ensuring the safety and security of the American public. Given today's threat environment, this requirement is as relevant now as it was when the 9/11 Commission recommended it.

Since its enactment, the Department of Homeland Security has implemented the law in careful phases, including most recently at military bases, most federal facilities, and nuclear power plants. Throughout this period, we have worked closely with states to support them in coming into compliance with the REAL ID Act standards. Now it is time to move toward final implementation of the law.

At present, 23 states are fully compliant with the REAL ID Act, and the Department has used its authority to grant states extensions when they demonstrate steps toward compliance. Thus, 27 states and territories have been granted extensions for a period of time to become compliant. Six states and territories – Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, Washington, and American Samoa – are noncompliant and do not currently have extensions.

We have now reached the final phase of implementation of the REAL ID Act, which relates to commercial air travel. These are the timelines for that final phase:

- **Effective immediately**, the Department of Homeland Security will conduct outreach to educate the traveling public about the timeline below, and continue engagements with states to encourage compliance with REAL ID standards.
- **Starting July 15, 2016**, TSA, in coordination with airlines and airport stakeholders, will begin to issue web-based advisories and notifications to the traveling public.
- **Starting December 15, 2016**, TSA will expand outreach at its airport checkpoints through signage, handouts, and other methods.
- **Starting January 22, 2018**, passengers with a driver's license issued by a state that is still not compliant with the REAL ID Act (and has not been granted an extension) will need to show an alternative form of acceptable identification for domestic air travel to board their flight. To check whether your state is compliant or has an extension, click [here](#). Passengers with driver's licenses issued by a state that is compliant with REAL ID (or a state that has been issued an extension) will still be able to use their driver's licenses or identification cards.
- **Starting October 1, 2020**, every air traveler will need a REAL ID-compliant license, or another acceptable form of identification, for domestic air travel.

Important: Right now, no individual needs to adjust travel plans, or rush out to get a new driver's license or a passport for domestic air travel. Until January 22, 2018, residents of all states will still be able to use a state-issued driver's license or identification card for domestic air travel. Passengers can also continue to use any of the various other forms of identification accepted by TSA (such as a Passport or Passport Card, Global Entry card, U.S. military ID, airline or airport-issued ID, federally recognized tribal-issued photo ID).

Travelers are encouraged to check the REAL ID compliance status of their state on the [DHS website](#) and review [TSA's list of acceptable forms of identification](#). Travelers may also check with their state's driver's licensing agency about how to acquire a REAL ID compliant license.

Finally, we know that some states must change their laws to comply with the REAL ID Act. That is why we have determined to set the timetable above, and have provided extensions to several states. I urge state government leaders to take immediate action to comply with the REAL ID Act, to ensure the continued ability of their residents to fly unimpeded. It is time to move toward final compliance with this law.

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