

Senate Passes Real ID Act

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The U.S. Senate passed a bill Tuesday that would create an electronic ID card designed to stop illegal immigrants from getting driver's licenses. The U.S. House of Representatives earlier this year passed its version of the bill, which was tacked onto a measure to pay for military activities in Iraq.

The legislation, which President George W. Bush is expected to sign, requires states to issue federally approved electronic ID cards, including driver's licenses. Anyone without such a card would not be permitted to board an airplane or Amtrak train, to open a bank account, or to enter a federal building.

Called the Real ID Act, the bill mandates that driver's licenses and other ID cards include a digital photo, various features designed to thwart counterfeiting, and a "common machine-readable technology" such as a radio frequency identification (RFID) tag. The technology must meet requirements set out by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The provisions take effect in May 2008.

"The Real ID is vital to preventing foreign terrorists from hiding in plain sight while conducting their operations and planning attacks," House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner (R-Wisconsin) said in a statement. "By targeting terrorist travel, the Real ID will assist in our War on Terror efforts to disrupt terrorist operations and help secure our borders."

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