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Governor Bill Walker
STATE OF ALASKA

January 20, 2017

The Honorable Bryce Edgmon
Speaker of the House
Alaska State Legislature
State Capitol Room 208
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Speaker Edgmon:

Under the authority of Article III, Section 18, of the Alaska Constitution, I am transmitting a bill relating to the implementation of the federal REAL ID Act of 2005 for the issuance of identification cards and driver licenses. The bill intends to allow the Department of Administration (Department) to issue both REAL ID compliant and noncompliant identification cards and driver licenses. The bill will also remove the funding restriction that prevents the State from complying with the REAL ID Act.

The REAL ID Act of 2005 (Act) is comprised of several sections that strengthen federal laws to protect against terrorist entry into the United States, improve security for driver licenses and identification cards, improve border infrastructure, and changes other aspects of immigration law. In order to prevent terrorists from obtaining state driver licenses and identification cards, the Act creates national standards for their issuance and manufacture, and mandates what source documents states can use to verify a person's identity. The Act does not usurp State authority to issue licenses or identification cards, but rather provides stronger oversight to ensure that all licenses and identification cards are less subject to tampering and fraud.

Similar to our current driver license regime, the bill gives the Department the authority to adopt regulations to issue compliant licenses and identification cards. The regulations must conform to the Act and federal regulations to ensure that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security certifies the licenses and cards issued by the State. Once the regulations are adopted, the Department will begin to offer the compliant driver licenses and compliant identification cards to the public.

The benefits of the State issuing compliant licenses and identification cards include allowing our residents to access military facilities, federal facilities, and pass through Transportation Security Administration checkpoints at airports with their State identification documents. Currently, Alaska driver licenses and identification cards cannot be used to enter military bases. It is expected that Alaskans will soon be unable to fly domestically or access federal buildings because our documents do not conform to the Act's requirements. This will require Alaskans to use their passport or other

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federally issued identification documents to fly to the lower forty-eight or go to a federal building. For those who do not have a passport, they will be required to obtain one at an additional personal expense to themselves.

The bill also recognizes that some Alaskans may not want a REAL ID license or identification card. To accommodate those people, the State will continue to issue non-Real ID compliant identification documents. If the Department is not sure which document a person wants, the default option will be a noncompliant one. Furthermore, a noncompliant document can never cost more than a compliant one, and the State must treat all driver licenses and identification cards the same. With these provisions in place, we strike the right balance between offering federally recognized and traditional identification documents.

I urge your prompt and favorable action on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Walker
Governor

Enclosure