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Next week, DMV won't have to look away

Posted: March 27, 2007



**Patrick
McIlheran**

Come Sunday, some Wisconsin bureaucrats will feel relief. This is a good sign.

The bureaucrats, who work for the state Motor Vehicles Division, are relieved they won't be helping to break the law. Until now, they've been unwillingly doing that, providing driver's licenses, a basis for a legally documented American life, to people here illegally. State law says the agency can't deny a license to someone for being an illegal immigrant, say officials. That ends Sunday.

Wisconsin is one of 10 states that doesn't require proof of lawful presence, as it's known. This has meant that illegal immigrants came here to get a license they couldn't get in Illinois, Minnesota or elsewhere. That's fraud. Gary Guenther, who oversees the DMV's field services, says the agency took steps to cut down on it, investigating addresses and changing procedures. But Sunday's change, ending our status as the Island of Easy Licenses, will do much more, he says.

Then you've got people who genuinely do live in Wisconsin but are illegal immigrants. That the agency had to give them licenses anyhow, helping them stay, grated on some people, including some DMV employees.

Ex-employee Lee Steines said it bothered him enough that he quit his customer service job at the agency a year ago. The question, he said, was,

"Am I going to do this, or am I going to face myself in the mirror in the morning?"

He and other agents said they knew they were licensing illegal immigrants. Often, it was when they'd ask the customer for a Social Security number, something the state long has done. There's a form for applicants without one, mainly to handle religious objections. But Steines says he had applicants tell him they didn't have a number because they were in the U.S. illegally. Other agency employees have related similar stories. There wasn't anything they could do.

"It just wasn't right," Steines says. "And people knew in their hearts it wasn't right."

Steines doesn't fault the agency, limited by law and its state mandate. As Guenther puts it, "We have to operate in a way that supports the laws." His staff is good at spotting fake documents, he says, and it can decipher foreign-language birth certificates. But until Sunday, the agency doesn't have the authority to say no to someone in the U.S. illegally.

That's what changes: Along with proof of one's birth date, name, identity and Wisconsin home, the state will require proof an applicant's here legally.

Guenther is careful to note the change has pluses and minuses. It all serves a good purpose, he says. "You have to protect the integrity of the product" - the license.

This is not to say that most illegal immigrants are getting a Wisconsin license to cause trouble. They're doing it to drive to work. They broke U.S. law in coming here not because they wanted to be criminals but because they were looking for a better life.

But the better life is reflected in a pay stub with a Social Security number on it that isn't theirs. Steines says applicants would tell agents that. The pay stub that proved their Wisconsin residency bore a number that would come up invalid if checked. Whatever the intentions, illegal immigration involves fraud.

Protesters marched last weekend in Madison against the new rules, saying they'll "marginalize" people. Being here illegally already did that. If anything,

the explosion in illegal immigration threatens the welcome we extend to *legal* immigrants.





















In lieu of persuading Americans to change our immigration laws, the advocates of illegal immigrants demand we ignore the distinction between legal and illegal immigration. They demand we accept that illegal immigrants will drive no matter what, so we might as well give them IDs.

That's not right. More immigration would be good for America if it's handled properly. Accepting people who sneak in or who overstay visas while millions around the world wait a decade or more to get in the legal way doesn't seem to be a good way of handling it.

Telling state employees that they must, by law, ignore the fact a license applicant is here unlawfully isn't right, either. It shows contempt for law and for those who take it seriously. That this comes to an end on Sunday is good.

Patrick McIlheran is a Journal Sentinel editorial columnist. His e-mail address is pmcilheran@journalsentinel.com

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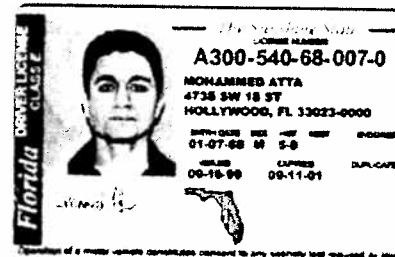
Drivers Licenses for illegal aliens

Issues

The open borders lobby routinely lobbies state legislatures to issue drivers licenses to illegal aliens as one of the keys to erasing the distinction between legal citizens and illegal aliens.

In the U.S., the drivers license is our de facto universal identification card. Yet many states do not thoroughly verify applicants' identities. Many states do not require a valid Social Security number to get a license and many will issue a state ID number for those without a Social Security number.

This makes it very easy for illegal aliens to obtain drivers licenses. These licenses become "breeder documents" which allow the recipient to obtain additional documents, based upon the false premise that he is a U.S. citizen. For example, all of the 9/11 hijackers had driver's licenses or state-issued non-driver's identification cards, which they then could use when opening bank accounts, renting housing, and boarding planes.



Eleven states issue drivers licenses to illegal aliens, including Alaska, Connecticut, Idaho, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Washington and West Virginia. In 2003, California's Governor Davis signed into law a bill that would give illegals drivers licenses. It is widely believed that this was the final act that contributed to his 2003 recall. Immediately after this law was signed, hundreds of thousands of signatures were collected that would have placed the question on the March 2004 general election ballot. Incoming Governor Schwarzenegger annulled the law, purportedly so that the electorate would not have a chance to vote on the issue.

One of the arguments in favor of issuing drivers licenses to illegal aliens is that it will make our roads safer. This is not likely, as someone who has broken U.S. law to come here will most likely continue to break our laws - including traffic laws - and to drive without insurance and to obtain "breeder" licenses under false names.

For more information, see:

- [Driver's License Security](#) by the Federation for American Immigration Reform.
- [Should illegal aliens get driver's licenses?](#), by Phyllis Schlafly, May 13, 2003.
- [Immigrant Access to Drivers' Licenses](#) - a handbook from a coalition of anti-American organizations to promote driver's licenses for illegal aliens.
- [MALDEF 'Profoundly Disappointed' With Governor Schwarzenegger's Veto Of Driver's License Bill](#), September 22, 2004.

Home Issues

**Institute rates Alaska DMV as one of most lax in U.S. -
LICENSES: State disputes claim that it deserves an "F" in verifying applicants' identities.**

Anchorage Daily News (AK)
April 22, 2004
Author: RICHARD RICHTMYER
Anchorage Daily News
Staff

Estimated printed pages: 4

Alaska's Division of Motor Vehicles is among the nation's most lax when it comes to verifying the identities of driver's license applicants, according to a new study.

"The findings, frankly, are stunning," said Amitai Etzioni, director of the Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies at George Washington University, which examined the safeguards in place at motor vehicle offices in all 50 states.

The Institute, which promotes a balance between individual rights and social responsibility, looked into the subject because driver's licenses are widely used as the definitive ID, and the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorists got theirs through other lax states, namely Florida and Virginia, Etzioni said.

Those states have since shored up their systems, making states that haven't done so attractive destinations for future terrorists looking to acquire false identification from a valid source, Etzioni said.

"We know that the terrorists always discover where the weakest links are," he said.

Officials at the DMV and the state's Division of Homeland Security called the study's conclusions unfair, arguing that it did not take into account all of the identity-verification measures in place, only a select few that aren't.

The Institute established four steps it said states should take, at a minimum, to ensure effective screening for fraudulent applications and assigned a grade based on how many they used.

The steps were verifying Social Security numbers using an online database system; requiring proof that the applicant is legally in the United States and a resident in the state; linking license expiration dates to visa expiration dates for foreigners; and using biometric information, such as fingerprints or retinal scans, to verify identity.

Alaska is one of only four states that got an "F" for not taking any of those steps, Etzioni said. Wisconsin, Michigan and Oregon also flunked the Institute's test.

DMV director Duane Bannock acknowledged that Alaska's system isn't perfect, but he argued that Alaska doesn't deserve a failing grade and the Institute's study only looked at part of the system.

Although Social Security cards are allowed as one form of acceptable identification, they are not required, and Bannock said it's easy to get a fake number that would check out on a database.

Applicants for an Alaska driver's license are required to present two pieces of identification, a "primary," that proves date of birth, and a "secondary" to prove identity. An applicant furnishing two primary forms of identification is not required to show a secondary form, Bannock said.

Acceptable primary identification documents include an original or certified birth certificate, a court order, another state's driver's license, a copy of a driver's record from another state, and a military ID card, Bannock said.

Social Security cards are on a list of about two dozen acceptable forms of secondary identification, which also includes health insurance cards, photographic employee identification cards and even income tax returns, Bannock said.

Workers who process driver's license applications across the state receive regular training in how to spot fake birth certificates, Social Security cards and other identifying documents, Bannock said.

Alaska's DMV has no immediate plans to put in place a Social Security number verification system, nor is it likely that applicants will be fingerprinted or retinal scanned any time soon, Bannock said.

However, he said the idea of making driver's licenses for foreigners expire when their travel or work visas expire is a good one, and he called the Institute's criticism on that point fair.

"I would expect that's going to be changed here very soon," he said.

Meanwhile, state lawmakers next week are expected to resume debate on a bill that would require proof of citizenship or legal residency as a condition for getting an Alaska driver's license, which has been a hot-button in statehouses across the nation recently.

Alaska's bill, sponsored by Rep. Bob Lynn, R-Anchorage, has languished in Juneau since January 2003. Lynn said he hopes to get it passed out of the State Affairs Committee and onto the House floor before the Legislature adjourns the session in three weeks.

"I don't want Osama bin Laden or any of his friends to be able to get Alaska driver's licenses, and the way it is now, that in fact could happen," Lynn said.

An aide to State Affairs Committee Chairman Bruce Weyhrauch said he has put it on the hearings calendar for next week.

Tom Burgess, deputy director of the state's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, said the **institute's** grading system was flawed, and that the state doesn't deserve an "F."

"Things like this do cause us concern, and we'd like to see something done in all these different areas," Burgess said.

"But I don't know that there's a bunch of holes in the system, and I haven't seen any indications that we have a problem," Burgess said. "People have to look at more criteria before they start assigning grades to states. A more thorough analysis is appropriate here."

Daily News reporter Richard Richtmyer can be reached at richtmyer@adn.com or 257-4344.

RANKING

GRAPHIC: A look at the criteria on which state DMVs were graded along with a list of the best and worst state DMVs.

Back Page

LICENSE TO HIDE: To read the report on drivers **license** screening in all 50 states, and how each state ranks, just follow the links.

www.adn.com/links

Caption:
Illustrated by Ron Engstrom

ILLUSTRATION SHOWS

Alaska's DMV fails test

A study shows **Alaska** often fails to verify the identities of driver **license** applicants.

Criteria

States were graded on how well they complied with four basic criteria:

- 1 Electronic verification of Social Security number
- 2 Requiring proof of legal residency in the nation and state
- 3 Linking **license** expiration dates to visa expiration dates for foreigners
- 4 Using biometric information such as fingerprints to verify identities

States that failed all criteria:

Alaska

Michigan

Oregon

Wisconsin

States that met all criteria:

Colorado

Kentucky

West Virginia

Caption:

Photo 1: ADNLinks_042204.jpg

Photo 2: 22DMV chart_042204.jpg

Edition: Final
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Tuesday, May 1, 2007



by: *Phyllis Schlafly*

Should Illegal Aliens Get Driver's Licenses?

[email column](#)

May 14, 2003

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Book recommendations



The hottest controversy in state legislatures today regards allowing illegal aliens to obtain driver's licenses. Americans were shocked to discover that most of the 19 hijackers on 9/11 carried driver's licenses from Virginia, Florida or New Jersey.

A driver's license is the pass to board a plane as well as the license to drive car. It confers a sort of quasi-citizenship and, as described by one illegal alien in Texas, "The driver's license ends up becoming our pass to be in this country."

Since 9/11, 21 states have enacted new legislation to make it harder to get driver's licenses, and legislation has been introduced in another 22 states. Even in Idaho, State Senator Cecil Ingram told a public hearing, "This has turned out to be a bigger problem than I thought."

The states embarrassed by the 9/11 hijackers have gotten the message. Virginia passed a bill to stop issuing driver's licenses to illegal aliens, and Florida and New Jersey passed legislation to coordinate driver's licenses with immigration visas.

New Jersey, where driver's licenses have been made of paper and do not require a photo, has long been the target of document fraud and counterfeiters. The state is now converting to state-of-the-art digitized driver's licenses with a dozen covert and overt security features, including a mandatory photo, bar code, hologram, and digital signature.

Peter Gadiel, whose 23-year-old son James died in the World Trade Center attack, has traveled from Connecticut to Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina and Tennessee to support beefed-up identification laws. Twenty states do not require applicants to prove they are legally in the United States.

Tennessee, another state known to be casual about issuing driver's licenses to illegal aliens, is considering a measure that would require driver's license applicants to present a document showing they are legally in this country. A Tennessee legislative committee also heard testimony about the need to tighten driver's license rules from April Gallop, a survivor of the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon.

Minnesota is trying to address the controversy through rulemaking by the Department of Public Safety. The proposed rule would require visitors to present documents to prove they are in the country legally, and the license would expire when their visas expire.

Georgia would seem an unlikely state for immigration controversies, but an estimated 435,000 Hispanics live in Georgia, a 300 percent increase over 1990, according to the U.S. Census. A lively big group showed up at a hearing in Gainesville from the town of Hall, where at least 19 percent of the

population is Hispanic and 85 percent of those are not citizens.

Georgia has been wrangling over a bill that would allow driver's licenses to be obtained by illegal aliens who come only from the "Free Trade Area of the Americas," i.e., from Canada, Latin America, and some Caribbean islands.

Among those who spoke against the proposed legislation was retired Col. A.R. "Mac" MacCahan (whose Army unit lost 206 of 212 men fighting in the Korean War). He asked, "What part of illegal don't you understand?" Others ask, why reward people who have committed at least three felonies: illegal entry into the U.S., purchasing fraudulent documents to get a job, and misrepresenting the legality of those documents at the workplace?

Kentucky was once one of the easiest states for illegal aliens to get a driver's license. That changed after a 1998 incident in which the Immigration and Naturalization Service arrested a vanload of illegals from Russia who had traveled from New York to Louisville to get driver's licenses.

After that, Kentucky reinstituted a policy of requiring that noncitizens applying for licenses take a written test. County Circuit Clerk Tony Miller said, "We try to be helpful. We offer that test in 21 languages," but Miller didn't explain how it promotes safety to license drivers who can't read the road signs.

Arizona and Mississippi have killed bills to make it easier for illegal aliens to get a driver's license. California Governor Gray Davis has twice vetoed a bill to allow illegal aliens to obtain driver's licenses, but the legislature is still debating this issue.

INS public affairs officer Garrison Courtney identified one of the biggest problems: "If they were illegal when they came here, it's very difficult to determine who they really are because they've created illegal IDs for themselves." The Seattle Times reported that one U.S. Department of Justice raid discovered piles of cash totaling \$95,262 plus \$10,000 worth of computer equipment and specialty papers that had been used to print 800 fake driver's licenses, green cards, work permits, Mexican birth certificates, and Social Security cards.

Many are concerned about the danger from issuing licenses to terrorists who might use trucks loaded with gasoline or other hazardous materials in the same way that hijackers used commercial airliners on 9/11. The U.S. Transportation Department reported last year that we lack sufficient safeguards, particularly from the many states that do not require applicants to prove they are legally in the country.

Phyllis Schlafly is the author of "Feminist Fantasies" (Spence Pub. Co., 2003)

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No Driver's Licenses for Calif. Illegal Immigrants

By Kimberly Edds

Special to The Washington Post

Friday, September 24, 2004; Page A04

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 23 -- Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) late Wednesday vetoed a bill that would have given as many as 2 million illegal immigrants California driver's licenses, saying the measure failed to provide sufficient security provisions at a time of heightened terrorism fears.

"This bill does not adequately address the security concerns that my Department of Homeland Security and I have, and I cannot support it," Schwarzenegger said in a brief veto message.

Ten states allow illegal immigrants to apply for licenses, and the issue has long been important to Latino lawmakers here. They accused Schwarzenegger of backing out of a deal to work together to reach a mutually acceptable bill.

"He chose to veto the best driver's license bill proposal in the nation -- one that strengthens national security and public safety while holding immigrants to the highest level of responsibility in the nation," said state Sen. Gil Cedillo (D-Los Angeles), who sponsored the bill and three previous versions.

Supporters say that illegal immigrants contribute to the state's economy and that the bill would have improved road safety by forcing them to take driving tests and get insurance.

But opponents argued the measure would reward people who are in the country illegally and could make it easier for terrorists to assimilate. Polls show a majority of California voters are against allowing undocumented immigrants licenses.

"Illegal immigrants are in direct violation of our federal immigration laws. These laws require them to be deported, not accommodated," Republican state Sen. Tom McClintock said.

In an effort to emphasize the added safety measures, the bill had been

renamed the Immigrant and Security Act. Illegal immigrants would have to pay for extensive background checks and be fingerprinted. The cost would have been \$141, compared with \$24 for a standard license.

The legislature approved a similar proposal last year which then-Gov. Gray Davis (D) signed into law. Davis had long opposed the measure but changed his stance amid his tough, and eventually unsuccessful, effort to stave off being recalled.

Schwarzenegger opposed the measure. After his election last year, legislators repealed the law.

Some lawmakers said they voted for the repeal only after being told Schwarzenegger was committed to a new proposal with increased security measures. But negotiations on the proposal stalled when Schwarzenegger insisted there be an identifying mark on the license to distinguish the holder as a noncitizen -- a requirement rejected by Latino lawmakers as discriminatory.

Schwarzenegger pledged to veto the measure when legislators approved it Aug. 27 without the mark provision.

More than 20 states, including Virginia, prohibit illegal immigrants from getting licenses.

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