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'Real ID' needed to fly as early as May 11

Resistance could mean hassle for Arizonans

By Howard Fischer

CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES

PHOENIX — Arizona residents may find themselves unable to use their state driver's licenses to board airplanes as soon as May 11.

On that day, only residents of states that have complied with the new requirements of the 2005 Real ID Act will have their driver's licenses recognized by federal officials for the purpose of travel. The same will be true for using the license as proof of identity to enter most federal buildings.

Instead Arizonans will need something else, such as a passport or a military ID card.

Russ Knocke, spokesman for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, said his agency will issue waivers to states that indicate by then that they eventually will comply with the new requirements but just need a little more time.

But none of that may help Arizona. That's because two state lawmakers are pushing a measure specifically to block Arizona from cooperating in creating what they believe will be the equivalent of a national identification card.

And Rep. Judy Burges, R-Skull Valley, said one version of the measure will be referred directly to voters, getting around a potential veto by Gov. Janet Napolitano.

Sen. Karen Johnson, R-Mesa, who is working with Burges, called the Real ID requirements an unwarranted intrusion into privacy. She rejected arguments that the new licenses are necessary to protect national security.

"If you want to give up your liberty for security, you're going to end up with neither one," she said.

There is broad legislative opposition to the federal requirements.

The state Senate voted last year to bar Arizona from participating in the Real ID program. The measure also was approved by two House committees but never got a final vote.

It may not even take legislative action to block Arizona from requiring the new licenses.

Gubernatorial press aide Jeanine L'Ecuyer said Friday that she was unsure whether Napolitano has the power to unilaterally order the state Motor Vehicle Division to revamp its licensing procedures. The governor may, in fact, have to get legislative permission to make the change, as well as to pass on the additional cost of \$8 per

those over 50 exempt until 2017

Among the details of the Real ID plan:

- By 2014, anyone seeking to board an airplane or enter a federal building would have to present a Real ID-compliant driver's license, with the notable exception of those over age 50.

- By 2017, even those over 50 must have Real ID-compliant cards to board planes.

- The traditional driver's license photograph would be taken at the beginning of the application instead of the end, so that if someone is rejected for failure to prove identity and citizenship, the applicant's photo would be kept on file and checked if that person tried to con the system again.

- The cards will have three layers of security measures but will not contain microchips as some had expected.

- Over the next year, the government expects all states to begin checking both the Social Security numbers and immigration status of license applicants.

— The Associated Press

license to motorists.

Knocke said states are free to ignore the new regulations. But he said legislators who object are being shortsighted.

"That tells me that those lawmakers are OK with illegal aliens continuing to exploit the system we have today to be able to use the identities of American citizens to get licenses," he said.

The licenses were mandated by Congress in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Several of the hijackers had multiple identifications — and multiple licenses.

Under Real ID provisions, states would be required to verify the identity and legal presence of driver's license applicants. That includes checking against the government's Social Security database and "pinging" the other 49 states' computers to ensure that the person does not already have a license under a different name, or perhaps by using a different initial.

"This is nothing but tremendous Big Brother," Johnson said. "When in the history of this country have we ever required people to have a card or something to move around in their own country?"

Neither Johnson nor Burges said their objections were blunted by the fact the license would be required only for air travel.

Despite the May 11 deadline, states that indicate they're willing to comply will have until 2011 to issue new licenses to anyone born after Dec. 1, 1964.

Older residents, who Knocke said are considered to be a lower risk of being terrorists, will have until 2017 to replace their existing licenses.

If Arizona opts out, it will not be alone. The American Civil Liberties Union says lawmakers in 17 states already have approved resolutions not to participate.

Knocke said some of those were concerns about costs. He said his agency has addressed that by altering the rules to give states more flexibility in some requirements, such as which card stock to use — moves he said cut the price tag nationwide from \$14.6 billion to \$3.9 billion.

The licenses also will not contain a microchip.

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