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## High-tech ID-card proposals moving ahead

SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON - The federal government is moving ahead with new identification-card proposals affecting the military, government workers and ordinary Americans renewing their driver's licenses.

Privacy advocates say the identification cards reflect Washington's embrace of fancy new "smart-card" technologies allowing pictures or fingerprints to be read by computers. But critics argue the cards give a false sense of security because they can be forged, faked, bought - or just ignored by terrorists with a determination to kill Americans.

On Tuesday, President Bush endorsed moves in Congress to tack federal regulations for state-issued driver's licenses onto the bill authorizing \$81 billion in additional spending for the war in Iraq.

In a letter to the House-Senate conference committee considering the legislation, the administration said the so-called Real ID Act would strengthen procedures under which states issue driver's licenses.

The Real ID Act requires all new driver's licenses to include digital photos, anti-counterfeiting features and "machine-readable" information verifying a person's identity.

The cards, which would be issued as current licenses expire, would be required for Americans using airplanes, trains, parks, federal courthouses and other places under federal control. The legislation also requires county courthouses to take steps to safeguard birth records and other personal data used to verify identity and citizenship, information that will be needed to get driver's licenses.

The Pentagon already has begun issuing "smart" ID cards to military personnel, with a chip giving information on the person's security clearances and identification.

Starting in October, U.S. agencies are expected to begin issuing counterfeit-proof ID cards to federal workers. New security cards are also required for civilian employees in airports and port facilities.

Civil liberties groups and conservative organizations are fighting the Real ID Act.

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