

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-1304

February 8, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary of Homeland Security
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

I write to request maximum flexibility from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it implements the REAL ID Act in Illinois. I also urge DHS to work closely with the Illinois Secretary of State and the Illinois General Assembly as the state works to comply with the federal REAL ID law and provide assistance should Illinois choose to submit a subsequent application for extension.

Illinois was recently denied a request by DHS to renew its extension for REAL ID Act compliance. As of January 10, 2016, Illinois driver's licenses and identification cards may no longer be sufficient to enter secure federal facilities, including military bases and nuclear plants. While I understand Illinois residents will still be able to use their Illinois driver's licenses and identification cards to board domestic flights and enter federal buildings that provide federal benefits and services, Illinois constituents who have relied on their state issued cards to access secure federal facilities will be affected.

DHS has granted individual facilities the flexibility to determine how to enforce the new restrictions. The DHS Interagency Security Committee has provided guidance on alternate access control procedures, which include accepting additional forms of identification and admitting visitors with authorized escorts. In light of these alternatives, I request that you ensure maximum flexibility for Illinois residents to access these impacted facilities.

Compliance with the REAL ID Act has proven exceptionally difficult for Illinois, which is currently operating without a state budget. While Illinois has satisfied 84 percent of its requirements, the cost to implement the remaining criteria is estimated to cost Illinois an additional \$57 million over four years. These significant costs pose a unique challenge as the state works toward implementing the law without the necessary financial resources.

I request that DHS work closely with state officials to provide clear guidance and flexibility to Illinois residents about the new requirements to access secure federal facilities and provide assistance should Illinois choose to resubmit an application for an extension.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate