

**Opening Statement of Senator George Voinovich, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce  
and the District of Columbia**

**“Understanding the Realities of REAL ID: A Review of Efforts to Secure Drivers’  
Licenses and Identification Cards.”**

**March 26, 2007**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing to discuss the proposed regulations for and implementation of REAL ID. The statutory requirement to issue 245 million secure driver’s licenses in five years places a significant burden on our states, which bear the bulk of the responsibility for meeting this mandate.

The long-awaited draft regulation to implement REAL ID was released earlier this month. I want to begin by commending the Department of Homeland Security for its outreach process. The draft regulation clearly reflects a number of common sense recommendations made by states.

I had the opportunity to meet with Secretary Chertoff last month to discuss REAL ID, and was heartened by his sincere commitment to make full use of the flexibilities provided in the draft regulation. Secretary Chertoff is firmly committed to waiving the May 2008 compliance deadline until the end of 2009 for any state that makes a reasonable request.

However, I am concerned by the number of hurdles that stand in the way, including the cost to states and the availability of the electronic verification systems. It is important that we work together to find solutions to these challenges before us. The relationship between the federal government and state and local governments should be one of partnership. Sadly, that is not always the case as the federal government has a tendency to force new responsibilities on state and local governments without providing adequate funding to cover the true cost.

As Governor of Ohio, I became particularly concerned with the cost of federal mandates. During my tenure, I worked tirelessly with state and local groups to help pass the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act. As a matter of fact, the first time in my life that I set foot on the floor of the United States Senate was when the Unfunded Mandates Relief legislation passed. I was in the Rose Garden representing state and local governments when President Clinton signed the legislation in 1995. That pen is proudly displayed in my office today.

DHS estimates the cost for states to comply with REAL ID will exceed \$14 billion and that most of these costs will be incurred in the first five years. Ohio estimates that it will need \$45 million to initially comply with and \$11 million annually to run the program. As someone who has been responsible for balancing a public budget, I can assure you these are significant costs that require tough choices.

This unfunded mandate poses a significant financial burden on states, many of whom are facing tight budgets. Though I am pleased that the Department will allow states to use 20 percent of their State Homeland Security Grant Program funds to help implement REAL ID; I worry about the unmet homeland security needs that will be put on the backburner if states elect this option. I question whether Congress understands the huge cost burden we are placing on states, and believe that the federal government should provide the necessary funding to aid states as they reconfigure their driver's license requirements to meet their new federal responsibility.

Technology will also be a key factor in the successful implementation of REAL ID. States will need functional access to a number of databases for verification of an individual's identity. Given the limited timeframe, our federal government must move quickly to ensure nationwide access to the required databases. As we ask states to do their part, we must be sure that the federal government is also meeting its responsibilities in a timely manner.

The implementation of REAL ID comes at a time when the federal government is developing a number of new identification documents, including the PASS card, biometric passports, the TWIC card, and the FAST card. It seems to me that we ought to take a fresh look at the various identification requirements and consider whether or not some of the documents could be used for multiple purposes. For example, common sense would suggest that residents could use their REAL ID cards to cross our northern land border, instead of having to also apply for either a PASS card or a passport.

My concerns should not suggest that I am opposed to REAL ID. Rather, I want to be sure that as we move forward with implementation, we are honest about the true cost of compliance. DHS must also redouble its efforts to work closely with states to help ensure a seamless implementation. This partnership is essential to the success of REAL ID, and, more importantly, to securing our homeland from another terrorist attack.

Mr. Chairman, today's hearing marks an important first step in our oversight of REAL ID. As implementation moves forward, I would suggest that we invite some of our witnesses today, including DHS, to report back to us in three months on their progress.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.