

Minnesota Enacts Real ID Bill in Compliance with Federal Law

On May 18, 2017, Governor Dayton signed the Real ID bill to bring Minnesota driver's licenses in line with the federal Real ID law, ensuring that Minnesotans will not have to use passports to get through airport security. Minnesota was the last state in the country to adopt the new federal security standards before the January 2018 deadline.

In 2005, Congress passed the Real ID Act to set minimum security standards for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards, which was part of the recommendations from the 9/11 Commission.

Lawmakers from both parties worked for years to bring Minnesota in compliance with the 2005 federal law, but compromises repeatedly fell apart over disagreements on driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants. Republicans argued that the state should strengthen a rule that currently prohibits licenses for people in the country illegally while Democrats argued that it should be excluded from the Real ID debate.

The Minnesota Real ID bill was finally passed by the House 120-11 and the Senate 57-8 before the Governor signed it into law with an effective date of July 1, 2017. Minnesota will now apply to the federal government for an extension of time to comply with the federal Real ID Act.

The Minnesota Real ID law requires the Department of Public Safety to have Real ID licenses available by October 1, 2018. However, state lawmakers have requested the federal government allow Minnesota's current standard licenses to continue to comply until they expire.

Minnesota will not mandate Real ID licenses, creating the option of a noncompliant license with lower standards than what is required to obtain the Real ID license. Minnesotans who opt for the noncompliant licenses will need a passport or some other kind of added identification in order to board airplanes or get into certain federal facilities.