

## Commentary

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# Reminder: You'll Need Federal Government 'Real ID' if You Want to Fly in 2025



Travelers wait in line at a security checkpoint at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, Illinois, on November 22, 2024, ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday. (KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI / AFP via Getty Images)

By [C. Douglas Golden](#) • December 31, 2024 at 12:23am

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It's Dec. 31, and we're all busy contemplating just what lies ahead in 2025. Some of the changes will be predictable. For instance, we will have a president who will know he's president starting on Jan. 20.

Some of the changes, however, aren't as heavily advertised as others — and one of them might not be as welcome as you'd like, particularly if you don't have a so-called “Real ID.”

You've probably forgotten about the “Real ID.” Back in 2005 — four years after [9/11](#) — Congress passed an act requiring new federal standards for identification, both making the cards more secure and harder to obtain.

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Real ID requirements were supposed to go into effect on May 11, 2008. For perspective, that's the day when the first movie in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, “Iron Man,” completed its first weekend at the box office in No. 1, and people born on that date will be graduating high school in the next year or two.

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article.

“Come early May, you will need a REAL ID-compliant ID (which you may already have) to board a domestic flight. It will also be necessary if you are visiting certain federal facilities or entering a nuclear power plant,” the service reported.

“Once the REAL ID requirement kicks in, federal agencies like TSA will be prohibited from accepting state-issued IDs that do not meet the necessary standards.”

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At this point, they noted, “all states must at least require proof of your legal name, date of birth, Social Security number, legal residency, and two forms verifying your address before issuing a driver’s license or ID card.”

“Thankfully, many states have been issuing REAL ID-compliant IDs for years, which means there is a good chance you already have one. The quickest way to tell is by looking at your driver’s license or state-issued ID: if there is a star — it will be either black or gold, appear as a star or a cutout — your ID is a REAL ID.”

**Was Real ID a good idea?**

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If

you opt out of the program, you’ll be issued a license with “Federal Limits Apply” on it.

“As of the end of December, the REAL ID rules will take effect on May 7, 2025. Once the deadline passes, if you do not have a REAL ID, you may need to provide another form of identification, like a U.S. passport or military ID, to board a plane,” Nexstar noted.

If this sounds all well and good for you, consider the case of David O’Connor — a [U.S. military vet](#) who went to apply for a Real ID and ended up losing both his driver’s license and his citizenship earlier this year.

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O'Connor, a former commercial truck driver in several states, including his current home in Tennessee, went in to convert his license. However, Tennessee's requirements include "Official Birth Certificate issued by a U.S. state, jurisdiction or territory (Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, Swain's Island, Guam)," "U.S. Government-issued Certified Birth Certificate," "U.S. Certificate of Birth Abroad (DS-1350 or FS-545)" or "Valid, unexpired U.S. Passport."

That was the problem — O'Connor was born [in Canada](#) to American citizens and, despite, the fact that he had lived in the United States for seven decades and been driving in it for 61 years, he'd basically been told he was a non-citizen who couldn't drive.

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"They told me I shouldn't have had the license in the first place 'cause I couldn't prove that I was a citizen," O'Connor told [WTVF-TV](#).

"They said, 'No, that's no good. We shouldn't have given you the license in the first place,'" he said. "And they just canceled my license right then and there."

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“I’ve been here for 77 years,” O’Connor said, telling the station, “None of this [situation] makes any sense to me.”



After pressure from [WTVF's](#) reporting and the threat of a federal lawsuit, O’Connor got his license a little while later.

Security card. The fact is, once May approaches and those of us who need Real IDs don't have them, we're going to get a response like Tennessee Homeland Security Secretary Jeff Long gave after WTVF's initial report about O'Connor's Catch-22.

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“I can understand that, but everyone has to realize that after 9/11, the Real ID is very specific and has a federal requirement of what you have to have,” he said.

Of course, as we approach a quarter of a century since 9/11, we know that federalizing ID standards is more or less pointless; the weak point in the system with those terrorist attacks was a series of missed red flags by the same team of bureaucrats we're now entrusting to federalize what was once a state matter, the issuance of driver's licenses.

It's impossible to believe that legislation so unwieldy that it will be implemented only 17 years after it was supposed to have actually stopped an attack — or done anything, period, aside from create new, fresh levels of [bureaucracy](#) for people to navigate.

Perhaps this is nothing more than a waste of time and money, and I'm merely hyperventilating here. Or, perhaps the case of David O'Connor is a canary in the coal mine ×

even need one yet.

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C. Douglas Golden is a writer who splits his time between the United States and Southeast Asia. Specializing in political commentary and world affairs, he's written for Conservative Tribune and The Western Journal since 2014.

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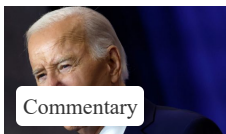
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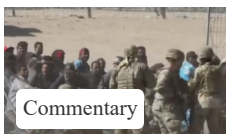
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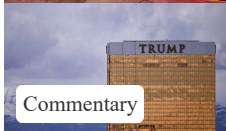
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