
Proponents of the Act argue that it “to make sure our driver’s licenses and government issued IDs can’t be faked. We need to hold employers accountable for hiring illegal workers, and real IDs will make this enforcement possible.” (<http://www.gop.com/News/Read.aspx?ID=6222>) Even if one disapproves of the very idea of a national identity card – with all the privacy concerns that such a system raises, (<http://www.epic.org/privacy/id_cards/>) it’s hard to disagree that the burden of extra paperwork would inconvenience some illegal immigrants to the US as well imposing additional nuisances on citizens and legal residents requesting drivers’ licenses.

However, the Department of Homeland Security has a startling assertion on its Website: “REAL ID is a nationwide effort intended to prevent terrorism. . . ." (<http://www.dhs.gov/xprevprot/laws/gc_1172767635686.shtm>) One category of objections is exactly analogous to opposition to gun-control laws: the laws won’t work because criminals will ignore them. For example, Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) wrote in 2005, “One overriding point has been forgotten: Criminals don’t obey laws! As with gun control, national ID cards will only affect law-abiding citizens. Do we really believe a terrorist bent on murder is going to dutifully obtain a federal ID card? Do we believe that people who openly flout our immigration laws will nonetheless respect our ID requirements? Any ID card can be forged; any federal agency or state DMV is susceptible to corruption. Criminals can and will obtain national ID cards, or operate without them. National ID cards will be used to track the law-abiding masses, not criminals.” (<http://www.house.gov/paul/tst/tst2005/tst050905.htm>) By this reasoning, we would have no laws at all.

More on this topic in the next column.

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