

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 12, 2007

The Honorable David Price
Chairman
Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Ranking Member
Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Price and Ranking Member Rogers:

We appreciate your thoughtful leadership of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee and the quality work put forth in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 House Homeland Security Appropriations bill. This bill is critical to giving the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) the resources it needs to maintain our security at home, ensure that our first responders have the tools to protect our citizens, enforce our immigration laws, and strengthen our borders.

On September 9, 2007, 9/11 Commission Chairman Tom Kean and Vice Chairman Lee Hamilton penned an opinion-editorial in the *Washington Post* entitled, "Are We Safer Today? Six Years After 9/11 and Three Years After the 9/11 Report, Is the U.S. Ready to Get Serious About Terrorism?" that included the following language: "Congress mandated national standards for secure driver's licenses but has not given states the money to make it happen."

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations Conference is an opportunity for the Congress to provide the much needed funding to help the states implement the REAL ID Act. A vital recommendation of the 9/11 Commission, the REAL ID Act was enacted by Congress in 2005 to improve the security of driver's licenses throughout the country. The House Homeland Security Appropriations bill, H.R.2638, contains \$50 million in dedicated funds for REAL ID in the State and Local Discretionary Grants Programs. Now is the time for the Congress to provide at least \$50 million in funding to help states implement this key unfulfilled recommendation of the 9/11 Commission. Experts agree that setting standards for our states' identification practices will significantly hamper the ability of terrorists and criminals to burrow into American society by obtaining state-issued identity documents.

On September 10th, the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee held a hearing entitled, "Confronting the Terrorist Threat to the Homeland: Six Years After 9/11." Senator Warner asked Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff, Director of National Intelligence Michael McConnell, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Robert Mueller and National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) Director John Redd: "[G]iven your dramatic statement here this morning, particularly about Al Qaida and the threat to this country, where [do] you rank the [REAL ID Act] as a priority program. And do you fully or equivocally endorse it?" Secretary Chertoff stated that he ranked the program "at the highest priority." Director McConnell stated that he "fully endorse[s]" the REAL ID Act. NCTC Director Redd stated that, "We need to get to the point where we can tell yes or no, this is the individual –

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or not.” Finally, Director Mueller stated that, “Anyone who has read the 9/11 Commission report and understands the utility that the hijackers put on these IDs would understand the necessity ... and the importance of [the REAL ID Act]. Absolutely support it.” Each official ranked the REAL ID Act and its objective as a high priority if not the highest priority.

Final regulations for REAL ID compliance are due out next month. The regulations are being drafted so that stakeholders’ concerns are answered in the key areas of (1) lowered costs for re-enrollment of driver license applicants; (2) greater flexibility in technical requirements; and (3) protecting applicants’ privacy. In addition, DHS has been partnering aggressively with several states to build Enhanced Driver’s Licenses to meet the requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative to protect vital cross-border traffic with Canada and Mexico.

Congress cannot afford to starve the states from much-needing funding support they need this year. Whether or not Congress helps the states with the costs of REAL ID implementation will go a long way in determining how many states will be able to work towards compliance versus having no choice but to seek further delay, watering down, or repeal of the law.

Obtaining federal funding for REAL ID compliance is a key priority of the National Governors’ Association, the National Conference of State Legislators, the Fraternal Order of Police, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, the Coalition for Secure Drivers Licenses, and a wide range of security and law enforcement officials.

By including not less than the \$50 million provided in the House language, this Conference has the ability to ensure that REAL ID is implemented without further delay. Our security and privacy demand no less. We thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Brian P. Bilbray
Member of Congress



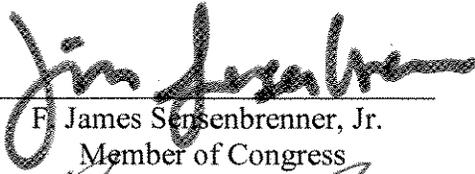
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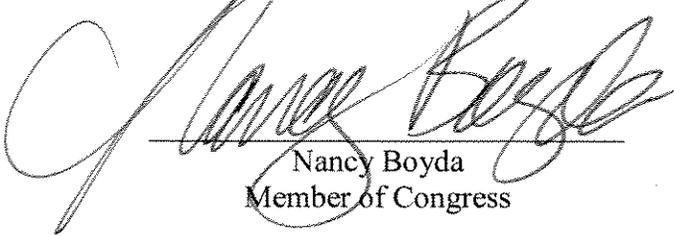
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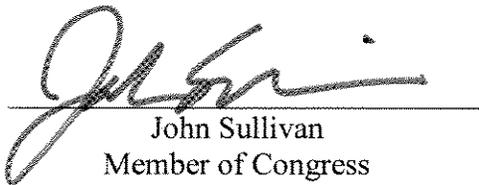
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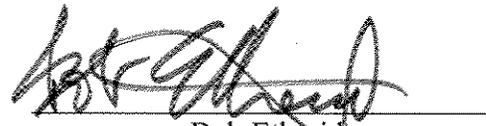
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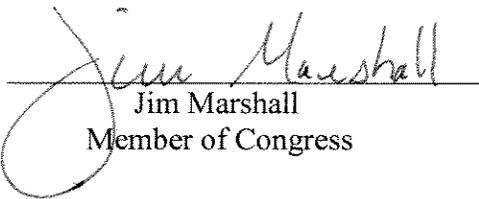
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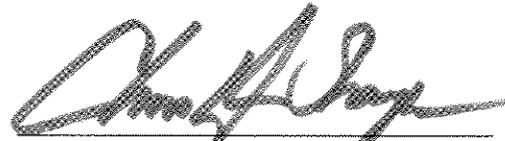
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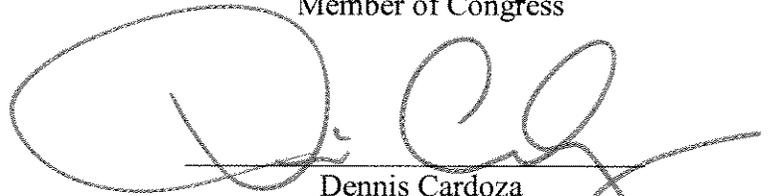
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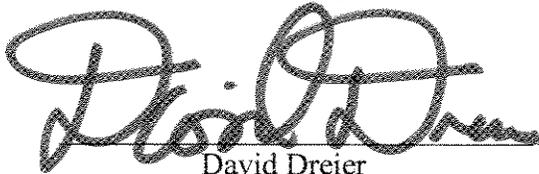
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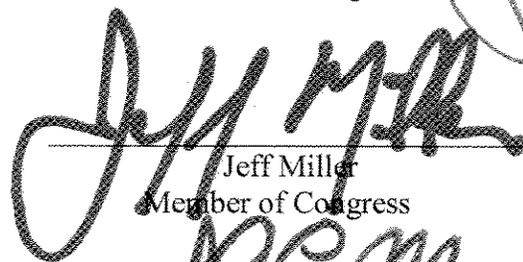
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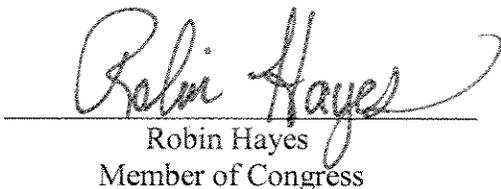
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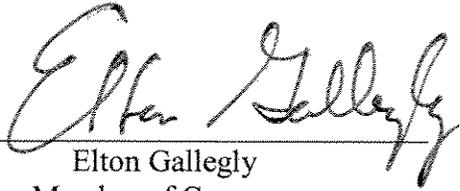
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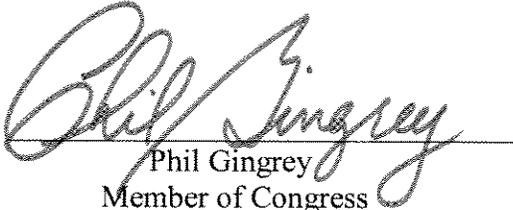
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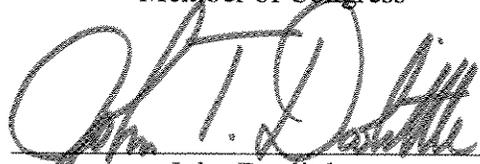
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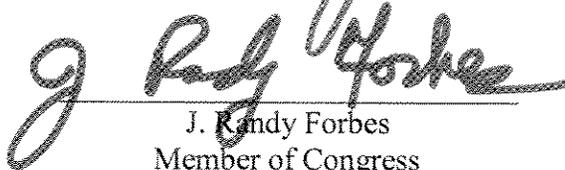
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