

THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE TRAVEL FACILITATION ACT

The purpose is to expand the number of documents able to satisfy the requirements of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative

1. Deadline extension

Extension of Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative Implementation deadline to the later of July 1, 2009, or 3 months after the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security can make the certification that these documentary alternatives are ready to go.

2. PASS Cards

- May be used for all land and sea travel in Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda.
- Shall be integrated with other expedited traveler technologies and databases
- Shall be easily portable and durable.
- Fees limited to \$20-\$30.
- Fees waived or reduced for children.

3. REAL ID Voluntary Citizenship Program

- A state may chose to participate in a program whereby the state may embed a person's United States citizenship status on a REAL ID driver's license. A state may not require a person to embed the person's citizenship on a driver's license.
- The State Department shall establish a mechanism to rapidly verify the citizenship status of the applicant.
- The bearer of a driver's license that meets the criteria of this program may use it to travel to Canada. The Secretary of DHS has the authority to permit its use for travel to Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda.
- The Secretaries of State and DHS shall work with appropriate Canadian authorities to certify Canadian IDs, including driver's licenses, as meeting security requirements and including a citizenship verification mechanism. Such licenses may used for travel to the U.S.
- A 2-year grace period is created for citizens of participating states or Canadian provinces who don't have new driver's licenses.
- Nothing in this Act shall have the effect of creating a national identity card.

4. Frequent Travel Programs

- Expand frequent traveler programs for people who want to pay a little bit more an submit themselves to a background check in exchange for faster processing at the border.
- Expand the NEXUS program to six additional ports of entry along the Cnadian border.
- Expand programs to facilitate expedited processing of United States citizens returning from recreational boat trips in Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda.

5. Process for Individuals who Don't Have the new Documents

- The Secretary of DHS should set up a limited day pass program or otherwise facilitate people who come to the border without documents.
- A reasonable grace period should be established at border crossings, during which time people lacking documents are educated about their options and allowed to pass.

6. Public Promotion Strategy

An aggressive public education program should be conducted, including:

- written notifications at or near public facilities, including border crossings, schools, libraries, Amtrak stations, and United States Post Offices near the border,
- consent to post such notifications on commercial property, such as offices of state departments of motor vehicles, gas stations, supermarkets, convenience stores, hotels, and travel agencies;
- an analytical study to measure the success of the public promotion plan; and

7. Certification

The deadline shall be contingent upon the certification of the following:

- The REAL ID Voluntary Citizenship Program described in subsection (c) has been implemented in at least half of the states which have a border, issue REAL ID driver's licenses and wish to participate in the REAL ID Voluntary Citizenship Program.
- PASS cards have been distributed to at least 90 percent of applicants, are turned around in a timely fashion.
- Border patrol officers are prepared to accept these documentary alternatives to a passport; and
- The public promotion plan has been conducted and proven to be successful.

8. Authorization of Appropriations