

U.S. TRAVEL
A S S O C I A T I O N[®]

WRITTEN STATEMENT

OF

Ms. TORI EMERSON BARNES
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND POLICY
U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

ON

**“IMPROVING SECURITY AT AMERICA’S AIRPORTS: STAKEHOLDER
PERSPECTIVES”**

BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND
TRANSPORTATION, SUBCOMMITTEE ON SECURITY
OCTOBER 17, 2019

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION
1100 NEW YORK AVENUE
WASHINGTON, DC 20005-3934
202.408.8422
FAX 202.408.1255

Chairman Sullivan, Ranking Member Markey, members of the Subcommittee...good morning.

I'm Tori Barnes, Executive Vice President of Public Affairs and Policy for the U.S. Travel Association. Thank you for inviting our association, the voice of the broader travel industry, to participate in this important hearing.

U.S. Travel is the only association that represents all sectors of the travel industry—hotels, airports, state and local tourism offices, car rental companies, theme parks and attractions, and many others. With such a diverse membership, our association has a focused mission: to increase travel to and within the United States, while maintaining the highest standards of security.

In 2018, domestic travelers spent \$933 billion in the United States, representing 86% of total travel expenditures. Domestic travel spending directly supported 7.7 million American jobs.

¹ Travel is vital to the American economy and workforce, and some of the best programs we have to facilitate travel are also ones that strengthen security the most.

And that's what I would like to speak with you about today—to discuss ways we can improve security and efficiency ahead of the October 1, 2020 deadline for REAL ID enforcement.

The REAL ID Act was passed in 2005, and its full implementation has been put off by a series of extensions intended to give states time to bring their IDs into compliance.² Now, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has said the days of REAL ID delays is over, and

¹ https://www.ustravel.org/system/files/media_root/document/Research_Fact-Sheet_Domestic-Travel.pdf

² <https://www.dhs.gov/state-extensions>

every American will need a REAL ID license or an acceptable alternative—such as a U.S. passport, a U.S. military ID, an enhanced driver’s license or a DHS trusted traveler card—to fly next October.³

But Americans simply are not REAL ID ready.

U.S. Travel commissioned Longwoods International, a market research consultancy, to conduct two surveys measuring both the public’s understanding of REAL ID Act requirements and awareness of the October 1, 2020 enforcement deadline. The studies, which were fielded in July and September 2019, found that an estimated 182 million Americans (72%) say they do not have a REAL ID license or are unsure if they do, and 57% of Americans are unaware of the October 1, 2020 deadline for REAL ID enforcement.

In fact, according to our survey, an estimated 99 million Americans (39%) say they do not currently have any acceptable form of identification (such as a REAL ID license, U.S. passport, a U.S. military ID, an enhanced driver’s license or a DHS trusted traveler card) that can be used to fly starting October 1, 2020. This finding is especially concerning, since, according to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and DHS, travelers that arrive at the airport without a REAL ID or an acceptable alternative will be turned away from the checkpoint and not be allowed through security to board their flights.

U.S. Travel Association economists estimate that if the REAL ID deadline were implemented today, approximately 78,500 American travelers would be denied boarding on the first day. This would cost the U.S. economy over \$40.3 million in lost travel-related spending.

³ https://www.ustravel.org/sites/default/files/media_root/document/REALID_Infographic.pdf

If that trend were to continue for a week, 549,500 million travelers would be turned away, costing nearly \$282 million in lost spending.⁴ This is simply unacceptable.

To help solve this problem, the U.S. Travel Association launched an industry-wide public education campaign to increase awareness of the October 1, 2020 deadline for REAL ID enforcement and to encourage Americans to get a compliant driver's license or acceptable alternative before next October.

But we can't solve this by simply pushing people to the DMV. Especially when two states, Oregon and Oklahoma, are not yet issuing REAL IDs and aren't expected to begin until next summer.⁵

REAL ID represented the most secure form of identification when it was conceived in 2005, but technology has advanced greatly in the past 14 years. There is an opportunity to bring security into the future, rather than just working to meet the requirements of the past. In order to take advantage of this opportunity, Congress and the administration must act.

U.S. Travel has outlined four policy proposals to modernize security and avoid chaos at our airports come October 1, 2020.⁶

First: Turning travelers away at the checkpoint is not an option. Congress should immediately direct the TSA to work with the private sector to develop procedures for clearing travelers that do not have a REAL ID or acceptable alternative on October 1, 2020. In particular, rural airports with limited resources and infrequent air travelers need to have procedures in place

⁴ https://www.ustravel.org/sites/default/files/media_root/document/REALID_SurveyFindings.pdf

⁵ <https://www.dhs.gov/real-id>

⁶ https://www.ustravel.org/sites/default/files/media_root/document/REALID_Factsheet_UST.pdf

to securely screen travelers who are not REAL ID ready. DHS and TSA should leverage existing airport infrastructure, services and identification methods to provide a solution for passengers who are unable or unaware of the need to obtain a REAL ID driver's license or accepted alternative.

Second: Congress must immediately direct DHS to utilize the existing security and identification features of trusted traveler programs by designating TSA Precheck and CLEAR enrollment as acceptable alternatives to REAL ID licenses. This process should be in place no later than October 1, 2020. Enrollees in TSA Precheck, for example, must be vetted against several law enforcement databases, ensuring greater security than a REAL ID alone.

Third: Congress must immediately act to modernize the REAL ID Act to allow for mobile devices and web-based REAL ID applications, and to permit TSA to accept mobile or digital REAL ID-compliant driver's licenses.

The REAL ID Act of 2005 (49 U.S.C. § 30301 Note) and federal regulations governing state implementation (6 CFR Part 37) require first-time applicants to apply in person at a DMV and present physical, rather than electronic, documents for verification. The in-person application requirements stem from statutory language directing the "presentation and verification" of source documents that DHS interprets to mean in-person transactions using physical documents. The REAL ID Act directive for states to complete a "mandatory facial capture" is also interpreted by DHS to mean an in-person transaction at a physical DMV location.

Modernizing the law and regulations will reduce DMV backlogs and increase security checkpoint efficiency. In 2005 there was no TSA Precheck and no mobile boarding

passes—advances in technology have allowed for greater security than America had when the law was enacted.

Fourth: DHS should accelerate the implementation of biometric identity verification technology at TSA checkpoints. This is simply a way to provide faster, more secure screening, using information that trusted travelers and passport holders have already provided to DHS. This is what TSOs are already doing—verifying an ID matches the person in front of them. Biometric identity verification does the exact same thing, but more accurately, securely and quickly. CBP is already using this technology in the Entry/Exit process. DHS should align with Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and move this technology to the TSA screening line to verify the identities of travelers who opt in.

Let me be clear: When it comes to biometrics, we are advocating for uses that are:

- Opt-in, where Americans have already decided to provide their information to DHS, the U.S. Department of State or a trusted traveler program;
- Governed by clear and reasonable guidelines for accuracy, privacy and performance; and
- Already being pursued by DHS at the direction of Congress, such as biometric exit, registered traveler, and the PreCheck biometric pilot program.

We are asking Congress to prioritize the opt-in programs that already have millions of participants; direct DHS to issue clear rules for accuracy, privacy, and performance as soon as possible; and align TSA's implementation of biometrics for passport holders and Precheck enrollees with DHS goals for implementing biometric exit.

If we don't use this as an opportunity to modernize REAL ID requirements, expand trusted traveler programs and enhance and improve biometrics, states, Congress, DHS and the

traveling public will spend the next year simply trying to meet the policies of the last decade, rather than preparing for the next generation of secure and efficient travel.

There is a major opportunity to modernize the systems DHS sought to strengthen with REAL ID 14 years ago. I'd like to thank the committee for its leadership in ensuring secure, efficient travel for all Americans. U.S. Travel and our industry looks forward to working with you on this issue.

Thank you.