

State leaders examine impact of license law

BY ELIZABETH DEORNELLAS
ASSISTANT STATE & NATIONAL EDITOR

Many states voiced strong opposition this summer to a federal measure to heighten the security of driver's licenses, yet North Carolina remains among the minority seeking compliance.

The enactment of the REAL ID Act, passed in 2005 to combat terrorism, has a flexible May 2008 deadline and is expected to cost a more than \$23 billion nationwide.

During the last legislative session, many states called the act an unfunded federal mandate that intrudes on state authority.

About two-thirds of the bills generated by state legislatures in 2007 addressing the issue were anti-REAL ID, said Matt Sundeen, spokesman for the National Conference of State Legislatures.

"We've seen a lot of pushback on this issue, although it hasn't all been pushback," he said.

Twenty state legislatures passed bills that were in opposition to the federal legislation; six states issued laws prohibiting any compliance with the act. Thirteen more states passed nonbinding resolutions declaring their opposition, Sundeen said.

But four states passed measures to bring their state into compliance with the act, and three states set aside funding to help compliance efforts, he added.

The latest N.C. budget includes a provision that requires the state Department of Transportation to report the projected cost of the act to the N.C. General Assembly. North Carolina has been unable to determine the cost of implementing the act because the federal regulations have not been finalized.

A bill that could ensure total compliance with the act was introduced in the N.C. House in February.

"We think we're further along than a lot of the states," said Marge Howell, an N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles communications officer.

North Carolina has put forward several initiatives to strengthen the security of driver's licenses.

State Rep. Cary Allred, R-Alamance, said that before North Carolina tightened its regulations

that applicants would come from as far as New Jersey and Pennsylvania to get a N.C. driver's license.

"North Carolina was known as the easiest place in the nation to get a driver's license," he said, adding that the security situation has definitely improved.

Allred acknowledged that he has reservations concerning the possible invasion of privacy involved with the act's establishment of a central database of information about U.S. citizens.

"I've had quite a few constituents who've questioned the necessity of it."

There are three main objections to the act: high cost estimates, invasion of privacy concerns and

federalist issues related to the federal regulation of what has always been a state issue, Sundeen said.

In Maine, one of the six states to pass a law prohibiting any state spending on efforts to comply with the act, all of those objections have been raised.

Officials estimated that implementing the act would cost Maine \$185 million in the first five years, said Don Cookson, communications director for Maine's Department of the Secretary of State.

Cookson said the act also would shift the responsibility of immigration enforcement to the states by requiring more extensive local measures to verify legal residency.

"That's a tremendous undertaking, something that really states should not have to concern themselves with," he said.

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

N.C. driver's license regulations

February 2004 DMV excludes the use of any foreign identification documents except valid passports paired with unexpired visas.

March 2004 DMV begins checking applications against the Social Security Administration's database.

February 2005 DMV begins electronically storing driver's license photographs.

December 2005 Licenses are made valid only for the period that the applicant's visa is valid.

August 2006 Individual taxpayer identification numbers are no longer accepted for applicants without Social Security numbers.

> Upcoming initiatives

Mid-2008 The state will be able to check the immigration status of applicants with the Department of Homeland Security.

Mid-2008 DMV offices will issue temporary certificates, good for 20 days; identification documents will then be checked and licenses will be mailed out from a central location.

SOURCE: N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles

Union lactation room opens

BY MEGHAN E. WOODS
STAFF WRITER

Many students know how difficult it can be to find a private place on campus. But for nursing mothers, finding a place that's both quiet and private can be downright impossible.

That's why the Student Union opened a room Monday specifically for University-affiliated mothers who are nursing children.

"We identified that there was a need for this on central campus," said Scott Hudson, associate director of the Carolina Union. "It was a need not just for staff, but for graduate students and undergraduate students as well."

The lactation room, in Union 3200, is the third lactation facility on campus, but the first to be located on central campus. The other lactation facilities are at the Carolina Women's Center on Franklin Street and the School of Public Health on South Campus.

The room features a lounge chair, two side tables, a rocking chair, a baby-changing station and power outlets for electric breast pumps.

Women can present their UNC One Card at the Union's front desk to get a key to the room.

Hudson said there had been requests for a centrally located lactation room in the past, from lactating mothers and from campus committees on family and child care.

But it was not until spring semester that the Carolina Union Board of Directors voted to put a lactation facility on central campus.

The lactation room also was a goal of 2006-07 Student Body President James Allred and Graduate and Professional Student Federation President Lauren Anderson.

Donna Bickford, director of the women's center, said the new lactation room is important space to have on campus.

"Faculty members have the privacy of their office where they could lactate, but some prefer not to use

their offices," she said. "Many staff members don't have offices, so the location in the Union makes the room very valuable."

Hudson said budgeting for the project was not an issue, as the room cost at most \$500, excluding labor.

"The work was done with our own staff," he said. "We bought a few things and used new furniture that we already had."

Bickford said there still should be more lactation rooms on campus because not everyone has time to walk back and forth to the Union.

"In an ideal situation, we'd have three or four lactation rooms for staff and students," she said. "Pumping and having to walk back makes it impossible to continue to breast-feed for those with rigid schedules."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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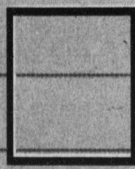
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