

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 24, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
2707 Martin Luther King Jr Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20528-0525

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

We write to inquire about the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)'s plans regarding the upcoming REAL ID Act implementation deadline.<sup>1</sup> Under DHS's stated plans, beginning October 1, 2020, every air traveler 18 years of age and older will need a REAL ID-compliant driver's license (or other acceptable form of ID) to fly within the United States.<sup>2</sup> DHS has stated that the agency has no plans to extend the October 1, 2020, compliance deadline.<sup>3</sup>

We are increasingly concerned about potential disruptions to air travel if significant numbers of travelers present themselves at Transportation Security Administration (TSA) checkpoints without acceptable forms of identification. According to TSA, only 27 percent of Americans have been issued a REAL ID-compliant license.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, a recent survey revealed only 43 percent of Americans are aware of the deadline<sup>5</sup> and concluded that 85,000 travelers could be denied access to their flights on the first day of implementation of REAL ID at airports if preparedness does not improve.<sup>6</sup>

DHS's efforts will play a crucial role in ensuring that the public is aware of the deadline and takes the necessary steps to acquire compliant identification. Additionally, it is critical that the Department do everything possible to ensure that Americans are not needlessly prevented from boarding flights to engage in business and tourism and visit family and friends. DHS should also develop contingency plans to deal with disruption at airports.

We are encouraged by the Department's increased public awareness campaign. As the leadership of key congressional committees with interest in this topic, we will continue to hold the Department accountable on this matter and request that you keep us informed of the Department's progress. To help inform our committees' oversight, please describe by February 7, 2020, the Department's efforts to develop contingency plans to prepare for potential disruptions at screening checkpoints that may accompany the October 1, 2020, deadline should a significant number of travelers

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<sup>1</sup> 79 FR 77836 - Minimum Standards for Driver's Licenses and Identification Cards Acceptable by Federal Agencies for Official Purposes

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> November 7, 2019 Briefing by DHS Office of Policy and TSA Office of Legislative Affairs to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/news/2019/10/01/real-id-tsa-airport-security-october-2020-deadline-year-away/3831459002/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ustravel.org/press/study-millions-americans-could-be-affected-real-id-deadline-2020>

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*

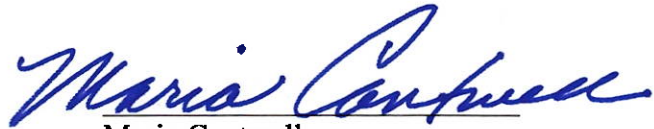
arrive without a REAL ID compliant driver's license or other acceptable forms of identification (e.g. passport, military ID).

We appreciate your prompt attention to this important matter and look forward to working with you to ensure America's air transportation system remains safe, secure, and efficient.

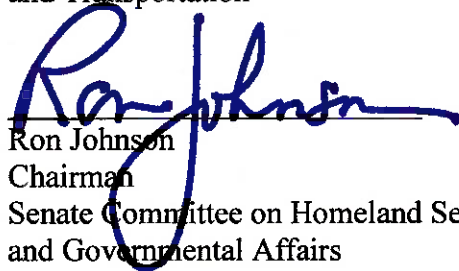
Sincerely,



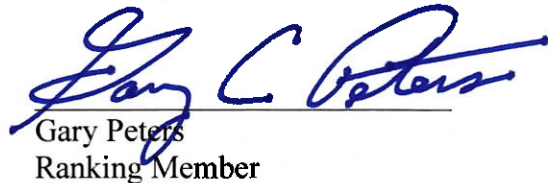
Roger F. Wicker  
Chairman  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,  
and Transportation



Maria Cantwell  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,  
and Transportation



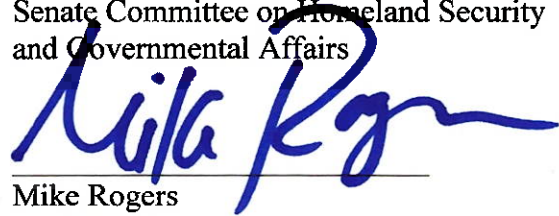
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and Governmental Affairs



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Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Homeland Security  
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Chairman  
House Committee on Homeland Security



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