



DHS and the State of Michigan Team Up to Advance Secure ID Initiatives

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) today reached an agreement with the state of Michigan to enhance the security features of the state's driver's license, which may serve in the future as an acceptable alternative document for crossing the United States' land and sea borders.

The Michigan agreement, similar to those reached with Washington, Vermont, Arizona, and New York last year, seeks to create an enhanced driver's license – which denotes both identity and citizenship – as a compliance option to fulfill Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) requirements. Both Washington and New York are presently issuing enhanced driver's licenses. WHTI requires all citizens of the United States, Canada, Mexico, and Bermuda to have a passport or other accepted document that establishes the bearer's identity and nationality to enter or depart the United States from within the Western Hemisphere. On Jan. 31, 2008, the U.S. ended the routine practice of accepting oral declarations of citizenship at land and sea ports of entry for admission into the U.S. Beginning June 1, 2009, only WHTI-compliant documents will be accepted at U.S. land and sea ports of entry.

"With this agreement, Michigan's leadership has shown both its innovative spirit and its commitment to national security," said DHS Assistant Secretary for Policy Stewart Baker. "The state enhanced driver's license will bolster security through advanced technology, and at the same time it will make travel faster and easier."

Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land added, "This innovative approach balances the need for customer convenience, economic stability and more secure borders. It reflects Michigan's unique relationship with Canada without compromising our shared goal of a safer America. I appreciate the Department of Homeland Security's cooperation and look forward to making this exciting option available to Michigan residents."

The state of Michigan will develop an enhanced driver's license that will provide residents, who voluntarily apply and qualify, with a document that is acceptable for use at U.S. land and sea ports. The enhanced driver's license will cost slightly more than a standard Michigan state driver's license and will include security features similar to a U.S. passport and passport card. Applicants for the enhanced driver's license must provide proof of citizenship, identity, and residence. Michigan's enhanced driver's licenses will be designed consistent with the requirements of REAL ID.

The 9/11 Commission endorsed secure documentation for determining admissibility into the country, and Congress mandated WHTI implementation in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. Prior to the transition process that began in January to limit acceptable documents and end the acceptance of oral declarations at land and sea ports, U.S. Customs and Border Protection frontline personnel had to consider more than 8,000 distinct state-issued birth certificates, driver's licenses or other forms of identification when making decisions on who and what to admit into the country.

For more information on the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative, visit www.dhs.gov.

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