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Radio chip coming soon to your driver's license? Homeland Security seeks next-generation REAL ID

Privacy advocates are issuing warnings about a new [radio](#) chip plan that ultimately could provide electronic identification for every adult in the U.S. and allow agents to compile attendance lists at anti-government rallies simply by walking through the assembly.

The proposal, which has earned the support of Janet Napolitano, the newly chosen chief of the Department of Homeland [Security](#), would embed radio chips in licenses, or "enhanced driver's licenses."

"Enhanced driver's licenses give confidence that the person holding the card is the person who is supposed to be holding the card, and it's less elaborate than REAL ID," Napolitano said in a Washington Times report.

REAL ID is a plan for a federal identification [system](#) standardized across the nation that so alarmed governors many states have adopted formal plans to oppose it. However, a privacy advocate today told WND that the EDLs are many times worse.

[Radio talk show host and identity chip expert Katherine Albrecht](#) said REAL ID earned the opposition of Christians because of its resemblance to the biblical "mark of the beast," civil libertarians opposed it for its "big brother" connotations and others worried about [identity theft](#) issues with the proposed databases.

"We got rid of the REAL ID program, but [this one] is way more insidious," she said.

Enhanced driver's licenses have built-in radio chips providing an identifying number or information that can be accessed by a remote reading unit while the license is inside a wallet or purse.

The technology already had been implemented in Washington state, where it is promoted as an alternative to a passport for traveling to Canada. So far, the program is optional.

But there are other agreements already approved with Michigan, Vermont, New York and [Arizona](#), and plans are under way in other states, including Texas, she said.

Napolitano, as Arizona's governor, was against the REAL ID, Albrecht said. Now, as chief of Homeland Security, she is suggesting the more aggressive electronic ID of Americans.

"She's coming out and saying, 'OK, OK, OK, you win. We won't do REAL ID. But what we probably ought to do is nationwide enhanced driver's licenses,'" Albrecht told WND.

"They're actually talking about issuing every person a spychip driver's license," she said. "That is the potential problem."

Imagine, she said, going to a First Amendment-protected event, a church or a mosque, or even a gun show or a peace rally.

What happens to all those people when a government operator carrying a reading device makes a circuit of the event?" she asked. "They could download all those unique ID numbers and link them."

Participants could find themselves on "watch" lists or their attendance at protests or rallies added to their government "dossier."

She said even if such license programs are run by states, there's virtually no way that the databases would not be linked and accessible to the federal government.

Albrecht said a hint of what is on the agenda was provided recently by [California](#) Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. The state's legislature approved a plan banning the government from using any radio chips in any ID documentation.

Schwarzenegger's veto noted he did not want to interfere with any coming or future federal programs for identifying people.

Albrecht's recent guest on her radio program was Michigan State Rep. Paul Opsommer, who said the government appears to be using a national anti-terrorism plan requiring people to document their identities as they enter the United States to promote the technology.

"The Western Hemisphere [Travel](#) Initiative was just about proving you were a citizen, not that you had to do it by any specific kind of technology," Opsommer said.

But he said, "We are close to the point now that if you don't want RFID in any of your documents that you can't leave the country or get back into it."

Opsommer said his own state sought an exception to the growing federal move toward driver's licenses with an electronic ID chip, and he was told that was "unlikely."

He was told, "They were trying to harmonize these standards with Canada and Mexico [so] it had to apply to everybody. I was absolutely dumbfounded."

[WND previously has reported on such chips when hospitals used them to identify newborns](#), a company [desired to embed immigrants with the electronic devices](#), a government health event [showcased them](#) and when [Wal-Mart used microchips to track customers](#).

Albrecht, who has worked on issues involving radio chip implants, REAL-ID, "Spychips" and other devices, provided a platform for Opsommer to talk about drivers licenses that include radio transmitters that provide identity information about the carrier. She is active with [the AntiChips.com](#) and [SpyChips.com](#) websites.

Opsommer said he's been trying for several years to gain permission for his state to develop its own secure license without a radio chip.

"They have flat out refused, and their reasoning is all about the need for what they call 'facilitative technology,' which they then determined was RFID," he said during the recent interview.

[According to the U.S. State Department](#), which regulates international travel requirements, U.S. citizens now "must show proof of identity and proof of U.S. citizenship when entering the United States from Canada, Mexico, Bermuda and the countries of the Caribbean by land or seas."

Documentation could be a U.S. passport or other paperwork such as birth certificates or drivers' licenses. But as of this summer, one of the options for returning residents will be an "Enhanced Driver's License."

The rules are being promulgated under the outline of the WHTI, a result of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which requires [travelers](#) to present a passport or other identity documents on entry into the U.S.

[While the government has expressed confidence that no personal or critical information will be revealed through the system](#), it also says drivers will need special information on how to use, carry and protect the radio-embedded licenses as well as "a shielded container that will prevent anyone from reading your license."

But Albrecht, the author or co-author of six books and videos, including the award-winning "Spychips: How major corporations and government plan to track your every move with RFID," warns it goes much further.

"This must be nipped in the bud. Enhanced DL's make REAL ID look like a walk in the park," Albrecht said.

"Look, I am all in favor of only giving drivers licenses to U.S. citizens or people that are otherwise here in this country legally," Opsommer said, "But we are already doing that in Michigan. We accomplished that without an EDL, as has virtually every other state via their own state laws.

"But just because we choose to only issue our license to U.S. citizens does not mean that our licenses should somehow then fall under federal control. It's still a state document, we are just controlling who we issue them to. But under the EDL program, the Department of Homeland Security is saying that making sure illegals don't get these is not enough. Now you need the chip to prove your citizenship," he continued.

Opsommer further warned the electronic chips embedded in licenses to confirm identity are just the first step.

"Canadians are also more connected to what is going on in Britain with the expansion of the national ID program there, and have seen the mission creep that occurs with things like gun control first hand. Whatever the reason, as an example, just last week the Canadian government repatriated a [database](#) from the U.S. that contained the driver's license data of their citizens," he said.

"Someone finally woke up and realized it would not be a good idea for that to be on American soil â€¦ I think it is only logical that we as state legislators really understand how the governments of Mexico and Canada will have access to our own citizen's data. Right now it is very ambiguous and even difficult for me to get answers on as a state representative."

But Opsommer said Big Brother concerns certainly have some foundation.

"So if EDLs are the new direction for secure licenses in all states, it just reinforces what many have been telling me that DHS wants to expand this program and turn it into a wireless national ID with a different name," he said. "We'll wake up one day and without a vote in Congress DHS will just pass a rule and say something like 'starting next month you will need an EDL to fly on a plane, or to buy a gun, or whatever.'"

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