Driver's Licenses For Illegals = Pseudo Amnesty

Oct. 1, 2003

In a flip-flop to court the Hispanic vote, California Governor Gray Davis signed a bill (which he had rejected twice before) to allow illegal aliens to get driver's licenses. Shamelessly pandering, he signed it on September 5 in front of a crowd of hundreds of immigrants and illegals who released balloons while chanting "No recall!"
A driver's license is colloquially known as the "keys to the kingdom." It is the "breeder document" that enables an alien to acquire all sorts of fraudulent documentation.

A driver's license is not merely a license to drive a car. It gives the illegal alien a passport to board a plane, get a job, rent an apartment or a car, open a bank account, enter a federal building, sign up for social services, travel back and forth across our borders with Mexico and Canada, buy a gun, and even register to vote.

Under current law, only residents with a Social Security number can obtain a driver's license, and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) checks its validity with the Social Security Administration. Under the new law, aliens can instead present an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) issued by Internal Revenue Service, but those numbers are worthless for identification purposes and IRS won't share its information anyway.

Rep. Chris Cox (R-CA) calls the new law an "invitation to forgery" for terrorists and criminals. That's because the new system (which lacks any credible identity check) will allow criminals of any nationality (even U.S. citizens who already have a driver's license) to apply for a new license under a phony ITIN and use it for illegal purposes.

An internal DMV memo obtained by KCRA-TV shows that the financial cost to California taxpayers will be immense when the law takes effect January 1. When the two million illegal aliens now in California queue up for their first-time driver's licenses, DMV says it will need "1,000 new positions to be located in 16 new temporary field offices for 12 to 18 months of operation."

Gray Davis ignored the big lesson of 9/11. All 9/11 hijackers had one or more state driver's licenses, which enabled them not only to board the fatal planes but also to live and travel in our country undetected while they plotted their crimes.

Unfortunately, California is not alone in committing this travesty. Fourteen other states allow illegal aliens to obtain driver's licenses (AK, CT, ID, LA, MT, NV, NM, NC, RI, TN, UT, WA, WV).

Seven of the 19 hijackers boarded the 9/11 planes with driver's licenses obtained from Virginia, which did not then require proof of identity from applicants (but has since remedied that dangerous policy). New Jersey, another state that provided driver's licenses to 9/11 hijackers, now requires applicants to prove they are legally in this country.

The issue has become a political hot potato in states where illegal aliens have congregated. A sign-waving, slogan-shouting crowd rallied in Atlanta on September 16 to demand that the Georgia Legislature allow the estimated 228,000 illegal aliens in that state to get driver's licenses.

The General Accounting Office told the Senate Finance Committee on September 9 how easy it is to get fake driver's licenses. In two out of three attempts, federal investigators were able to get driver's licenses

from motor vehicle departments using fraudulent driver's licenses from other states, birth certificates, or Social Security cards.

A driver's license is pseudo amnesty and just as much sheer lunacy as real amnesty; a driver's license confers identity; it's almost a national ID card. The driver's license works to erase the distinction between legals and illegals.

The effects of giving driver's licenses to illegal aliens can ripple into other areas such as enabling them to attend some state universities at in-state rates. Illegal aliens are now prohibited from buying or transferring firearms but, since gun transfer forms rely on the honor system to establish citizenship (just like voter registration documents), the driver's license will be a boost to the firearms smuggling rings operating in southern California.

Hallye Jordan, a spokesperson for the California Department of Justice, conceded, "If they lie on their dealer record of sale and say, 'yes they are a citizen' when they are not, there is ... not going to be a further check completed."

Californians are starting to collect signatures to repeal the new driver's license law by referendum. In the meantime, Congress should pass Rep. Tom Tancredo's (R-CO) bill (H.R. 3052) to withhold federal highway funds from states that give driver's licenses to illegal aliens, just as Congress has done to force the states to enact acceptable laws about seat belts, speed limits, alcohol content, and the drinking age.