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### ***DHS REAL ID Grants Now Available***

Since it was signed into law on May 11, 2005, the REAL ID Act of 2005 has been a hotly contested issue in the states--one that could potentially place an \$11 billion burden on state budgets and procurement in the next five years, according to an estimate by the National Governors Association.<sup>1</sup> Several states have voted to formally oppose the legislation or block state compliance with the Act, and many others will file for an extension for the implementation deadline. However, those states that do plan to comply with the December 2009 target for implementation of the REAL ID Act might be interested in exploring a grant opportunity announced by the Federal Government this week.

On December 13, 2007, the Department of Homeland Security (“**DHS**”) released new grant guidelines and application kits related to REAL ID implementation. The guidelines, available on the U.S. Grants.gov website<sup>2</sup>, address a grant totaling \$31.3 million and are designed to help states prepare for the implementation of REAL ID. **The deadline for submissions is January 28, 2008.**

*According to the DHS website, “The REAL ID Demonstration Grant Program will provide \$31.3 million for checking motor vehicle records in other states to ensure that drivers do not hold multiple licenses, and for verification against federal records like immigration status. This grant will help standardize methods by which states may seamlessly verify an applicant’s information with another state and deploy data and document verification capabilities that can be used by all states, while protecting personal identification information.”<sup>3</sup>*

The grant guidance indicates a preference for state applications that demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively with other states or entities in the development of the personal identification verification systems. To date, the grant program represents

<sup>1</sup> Perlman, Ellen. “REAL Nightmare”. *Governing*, June 2007, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> “The Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 Real ID Demonstration Grant Program” Grants.gov <http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=HqTHxdhthG1XvP1vRTqJ8ZQBzLJJMTLzjhqP019qfjivYShxhw1d!-1919188244?oppId=40204&flag2006=false&mode=VIEW>

<sup>3</sup> “DHS Releases REAL ID Grant Guidance.” U.S. Department of Homeland Security. December 13, 2007

the only direct appropriation of funds made by the federal government to assist with the implementation of the Real ID.<sup>4</sup>

Under the [Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of FY 2006](#), Congress appropriated \$40 million for the implementation of the Real ID. The remainder of the funds has been allocated to FEMA for administrative costs associated with the Real ID Grant Program and a \$3 million grant for a REAL ID Pilot Project awarded to Kentucky that tested unique software to improve identity verification capabilities.<sup>5</sup>

A related grant had an open period of only six days (December 14-20, 2007). The REAL ID Vital Events Verification State Project Grant will provide \$4 million to help verify birth certificates and other vital records and will complement the Kentucky grant referenced above. The additional \$4 million will further support and expand the pilot program, allowing other states to acquire and benefit from this or similar software that verifies birth record information for individuals applying for a REAL ID driver's license or ID card.<sup>6</sup>

## **Resources**

- Official DHS Announcement:  
[http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/pr\\_1197580232137.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/pr_1197580232137.shtm)
- The REAL ID Demonstration Grant Program:  
<http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=HqTHxdhthG1XvP1vRTqJ8ZQBzLJJM TLzjhqP019qfjvYShxhw1d!-1919188244?oppId=40204&flag2006=false&mode=VIEW>

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<sup>4</sup> “REAL ID Grant Program” National Conference of State Legislatures.  
<http://www.ncsl.org/standcomm/sctran/DHSRealIDGrantGuidance.htm>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> “DHS Releases REAL ID Grant Guidance.” U.S. Department of Homeland Security. December 13, 2007  
[http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/pr\\_1197580232137.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xnews/releases/pr_1197580232137.shtm)