

New Driver's License Can Improve Security Without National IDs

Gregg Kreizman

The American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) recommends ways to make the issuance of driver's licenses uniform nationwide. If this initiative can overcome four challenges, ID security will improve.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Event

On 14 January 2002, AAMVA, which represents U.S. and Canadian motor vehicle administrators and law enforcement officials, announced the recommendations of its Task Force on Identification Security for the issuance of security identification credentials:

- Standardize the processes for verifying identity prior to ID issuance.
- Continue the AAMVA's work on standards for improved security features of the ID itself — final recommendations planned by the end of 2002.
- Expand the Commercial Drivers License Information System (CDLIS) to establish a "one-person, one-unique-ID" database (expected to take a few years).
- Push the U.S. Congress to support uniformity in requirements for verifying identity, security features, and strong penalties for fraud and abuse.

Analysis

The AAMVA's proposals may represent a compromise acceptable to those who support and oppose a national ID. Supporters argue that a national ID will help prevent terrorism and fraud, vastly improve the convenience of e-business, and drive efficiencies in finance, healthcare and government. Detractors argue that a national ID will cost too much to implement and will erode people's privacy. AAMVA has steered away from saying that an improved driver's license would act as a national ID. AAMVA simply wants to improve the reliability and security of an ID that is widely accepted today for a variety of purposes — e.g., people use driver's licenses today for cashing checks and boarding planes.

AAMVA's proposals must overcome several challenges:

- Getting a critical mass of support in Congress for the improved standards and funding for the CDLIS expansion
- Overcoming the suspicions and objections of privacy advocates
- Inertia in the 51 U.S. jurisdictions with their disparate IDs and processes for issuing the IDs
- Gaining access to disparate federal systems to improve identity verification and residency before issuing an ID

However, AAMVA has some backing in Congress and experience with CDLIS in implementing a mandatory identity database with 20 million records. These assets combined with a message of the new ID's limited scope bode well for its prospects. Gartner recommends that states continue to work with AAMVA and industry to refine the physical and technical standards for the ID. In addition, Gartner strongly recommends that any law to increase the functions for such an ID should include strong privacy protection and enforcement language.

Analytical Source: Gregg Kreizman, e-Government Strategies — State & Local

Need to Know: Reference Material and Recommended Reading

- “Security, Privacy and Risk Management: 2002 and Beyond” (AV-14-9028) Forecasts the likely value of several information security tools, products and services in 2002. **By Vic Wheatman and William Malik**
- “Privacy Concerns Limit Consumer Demand for Identity Services” (FT-15-0694) With security and privacy e-consumers’ top priorities, identity services have a long way to go before they meet consumers’ basic needs and win their support. **By Avivah Litan**

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