COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

CONGRESSMAN TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN

NEWSRELEASE

For Immediate Release **Contact: David Marin/Drew Crockett**
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Davis to Introduce Stand-Alone License Security Legislation

Washington, DC – House Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA) announced that he intends to introduce today stand-alone identity security legislation that sets minimum standards for federal acceptance of drivers' licenses and state-issued identification cards. The legislation – identical to Davis-authored language approved last year by the committee and the full House -- includes common-sense reforms to address shortfalls identified by the 9-11 Commission.

Though approved by the House as part of the "9/11 Recommendations Implementation Act," the license security provisions were all but dropped from the conference report that was signed into law at the conclusion of the 108th Congress. This bill will put in place critical provisions requiring real regulations and establishing rigorous proof of identity for all applicants and strong security requirements for all driver's licenses and state-issued identity cards.

Davis explained his reason for introducing stand-alone legislation, in addition to his co-sponsorship of more expansive legislation introduced today by Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI): "Chairman Sensenbrenner has crafted vitally important national security legislation that I fully support. I am moving forward with separate license security legislation, however, for several reasons. These provisions originated in our committee and are squarely within our committee's jurisdiction. I think it's also important for members to have the chance to cast separate votes on separate issues. All of the provisions in the larger Sensenbrenner-Davis bill are important, but my primary focus has been on ID security, and that's why I'm eager to see the House vote on stand-alone legislation.

"The federal government needs documents that it can trust, and it is within its right – and our responsibility -- to establish minimum standards for federal acceptance,"

Davis said. "We need to establish that people are who they say they are. Just as the states expect the federal government to issue trustworthy, verifiable documents they can use for identification purposes, this legislation sets forth the federal government's expectation that the states do the same. The legislation does not preempt state authority – states would continue to issue these documents, and a standard appearance for these documents is specifically prohibited in the legislation. Furthermore, states could simply choose to issue two sets of licenses, one acceptable for federal purposes, the other acceptable for state purposes.

"This is not a national ID; this is not preemption; this is cooperation and common sense. States and the federal government must work together if we are to provide for the safety and security of the American people.

"All but one of the 9-11 hijackers acquired some form of U.S. identification documents, most by fraud. Acquisition of these forms of identification assisted them in boarding commercial flights, renting cars, and other activities necessary to carrying out their plans. We are dedicated to making sure we do not provide such a hospitable environment in the future. Minimum standards for federal recognition of identification documents are by no means a silver bullet; however, we know from our work in other areas that they are an important aspect of a comprehensive security policy," Davis said.

The legislation establishes minimum document and issuance standards for federal acceptance of State-issued driver's licenses and personal identification cards. It provides for a rulemaking process whereby the Department of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Department of Transportation and the states, would establish minimum standards based upon the principles set forth in statute, which focus on: requirements for minimum information provided on the driver's license or identification card; minimum personal identification information that must be obtained and verified from the applicant; minimum standards that must be part of the issuance process, including retention of source documents, restricted access to records, physical security of facilities, security clearance requirements and fraudulent document recognition training for employees; and would require data exchange between the States and with the Federal government. Finally, the legislation requires proof of legal presence in the United States.

The legislation gives states three years to comply with the minimum standards necessary to interface with the federal government.

This legislation is consistent with actions taken by individual states to date. For example, in 2003, Nevada took the same action by no longer accepting licenses from 23 states as primary proof of an individual's identity because their license and issuance standards are less stringent than Nevada's. Arizona took the similar action this summer by no longer accept the driver's license or identification card issue by 19 states as primary proof identity.

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