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May 7, 2025

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Real ID in New Mexico: Defending Privacy, Dignity, and Safety for All Communities

SANTA FE, NM— As the country begins to implement the federal [Real ID Act](#), immigrant communities and their allies are reaffirming their commitment to privacy, safety, and dignity for everyone. Somos Un Pueblo Unido is working to ensure New Mexico serves as a national model for protecting undocumented immigrants in the face of federal mandates.

Understanding the Real ID Act and Its Impact

Congress passed the Real ID Act in 2005 as a national measure to standardize state-issued identification. While it aims to improve federal facility security, the law has profound implications for marginalized communities, including undocumented immigrants. Its implementation has been fraught with pushback by policy makers, advocates and key industries, and has experienced delays for two decades because it overburdens many communities with having to obtain and submit multiple documents to motor vehicle offices to apply for a state driver's license or identification card.

One key requirement of the law, using a REAL ID compliant driver's license or identification card, rather than a standard state identification to submit to the Transportation Security Administration to board a plane, goes into effect today. Many other forms of identification, including a passport, will continue to be accepted at airports for domestic travel.

Somos and immigrant and privacy rights organizations across the country have long contended there are many negative effects of the Real ID Act:

- **Privacy Concerns:** Real ID creates a national database-like system that raises serious concerns about government overreach and data sharing between federal and state agencies.
- **Discrimination and Exclusion:** Residents unable to meet stringent documentation requirements, often immigrants, low-income individuals, Native Americans, the elderly and survivors of domestic violence, risk exclusion from air travel and certain federal buildings if they do not have other forms of identification such as a passport.

- **Fear and Confusion:** The rollout has caused widespread misinformation and fear, especially in immigrant communities, where concerns of enforcement and deportation are heightened.

Despite these challenges, Somos Un Pueblo Unido has fought tirelessly to ensure undocumented immigrants retain the right to drive legally and live without fear. Through grassroots organizing, policy advocacy, and legal education, Somos helped New Mexico create a two-tier licensing system that protects access while respecting privacy.

“Our communities stood up to xenophobia and fear-based policymaking,” **Marcela Díaz, Executive Director of Somos Un Pueblo Unido.** “Because immigrant-led organizing and our strong alliances with other groups representing New Mexicans experiencing homelessness, the elderly, Native Americans and privacy advocates, New Mexico created a path that centers dignity, not documentation status.”

As the Real ID law takes full effect, Somos urges all New Mexicans to:

- **Know Your Rights:** Carry a valid state ID or driver’s license, but remember: a Real ID is *not* required to drive, vote, or receive state services.
- **Travel:** A valid passport is valid for domestic travel and required for international travel.
- **Seek Trusted Help:** Avoid fraud or misinformation; contact the NM Motor Vehicle Division for accurate information.
- **Support Immigrant-Led Advocacy:** Advocate for privacy protections and inclusive licensing systems across the U.S., as modeled in New Mexico.
- **Protect Your Data:** Be cautious about how and where you share personal documents and ask how your information is stored or shared.

New Mexico’s approach to the Real ID Act demonstrates safety and inclusion are not mutually exclusive. While the law has brought real concerns, it has also sparked powerful resistance. We remain committed to policies that reflect our values, ones where immigrant families are not feared, but welcomed and defended rather than feared.

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About Somos Un Pueblo Unido

[Somos Un Pueblo Unido](#) is a statewide immigrant-based civil and workers' rights organization with membership teams in eight counties and worker centers in Santa Fe, Hobbs, Roswell, and Farmington.