

Wednesday, January 16, 2013

*Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico’s Third District sent a letter to U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano today urging the department to provide New Mexico with policy options that respect the state’s need to ensure that drivers carry insurance and comply with the REAL ID Act. Below is the text of the letter.*

January 16, 2013

Secretary Janet Napolitano  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Secretary Napolitano,

I appreciated working with you and your staff in the days and weeks leading to the Department’s December 20, 2012 announcement regarding the implementation of the REAL ID Act. The deferment granted to the state of New Mexico has assured my constituents that their ability to travel or visit federal facilities will not be impacted by the recent deadline. I encourage you to work closely in consultation with New Mexico officials to ensure that the state offers a REAL ID-compliant identification card as an option to its residents before the final implementation of the law.

According to the Insurance Research Council, over a quarter of New Mexico drivers lack insurance—the second highest rate in the nation. To partially address this problem, the state has sought to encourage all of its drivers, including non-citizens and undocumented immigrants, to attain a driver’s license in order to then obtain auto insurance. A number of other states, including Utah and Illinois, are currently working with your Department to ensure that their residents are able to obtain either a drivers license or a REAL ID-compliant identification card according to their personal needs.

Therefore, as you work with New Mexico to provide a secure identification document that complies with the REAL ID Act, I urge you to provide the state with policy options that respect New Mexico's need to ensure that its drivers carry insurance. For example, it is my understanding that states may issue multiple types of identification documents, some of which may contain a unique color identifier or design to designate them as not being suitable for federal purposes, in addition to their REAL ID Act-compliant documents.

Once again, I am thankful for your willingness to work with me to find a resolution to this issue that provides for both federal and state policy objectives. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any more assistance to you.

Sincerely,

Ben Ray Luján  
Member of Congress

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