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White House moving to scale back 'Real ID' law

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Washington- Yielding to a rebellion by states that refused to pay for it, the Obama administration is moving to scale back a federal law passed after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that was designed to tighten security requirements for driver's licenses, Homeland Security Department and congressional officials said.

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano wants to repeal and replace the controversial \$4 billion domestic security initiative known as Real ID, which calls for placing more-secure licenses in the hands of 245 million Americans by 2017. The new proposal, called Pass ID, would be cheaper, less rigorous and partly financed by federal grants, according to draft legislation that Napolitano's Senate allies plan to introduce as early as Monday.

The rebranding effort follows months of talks with the National Governors Association and poses political risks for Obama as well as Napolitano, a former Governors Association chairwoman who wants to soothe strained relations with the states without appearing to retreat on a recommendation by the 9/11 Commission.

Commissioners called for federal standards for driver's licenses and birth certificates, noting, "For terrorists, travel documents are as important as weapons." Eighteen of 19 terrorist hijackers in the 9/11 attacks obtained state IDs, some of them fraudulently, easing their movements inside the country.

But the Bush administration struggled to implement the 2005 law, delaying the program repeatedly as states called it an unfunded mandate and privacy advocates warned it would create a de facto national ID.

The new plan keeps elements of Real ID, such as requiring a digital photograph, signature and machine-readable features such as a bar code. States also will still need to verify applicants' identities and legal status by checking federal immigration, Social Security and State Department databases.

But it eliminates demands for new databases - linked through a national data hub - that would allow all states to store and cross-check such information, and a requirement that motor-vehicle departments verify birth certificates with originating agencies.

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