

## **SPITZER GETS REAL ON ID**

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### **Body**

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After executing a twisting double-backflip that wins him no points for style, Gov. **Spitzer** has landed at a better place on driver's licenses.

He is proposing to enhance the security of New York driver's licenses for citizens and legal immigrants while enabling illegal immigrants to drive with a sort of junior license that would not be valid for major identification purposes. Blasted by ideologues on both sides of the immigration divide, **Spitzer**'s compromise represents a sensible middle ground.

It's also a stunning capitulation to political reality by a governor whose original plan to let people **get** licenses without showing valid Social Security numbers was overwhelmingly rejected by the public. And the governor looks downright silly in declaring that, really, there's very little difference between his old and new plans.

In a deal with U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, **Spitzer** said starting next year New York will issue driver's licenses that comply with the federal **Real ID** Act, which sets nationwide security standards. These will be available only to drivers who meet toughened identification requirements and prove they're here legally - a far cry from issuing licenses without asking for a Social Security number.

Chertoff says New York's upgraded license, valid for boarding airplanes, will be "among the most secure in the country." Wonderful. Citizens would also be eligible for an even more secure license that would enable New Yorkers to cross the Canadian border without a passport.

Finally, **Spitzer** would grant basic licenses to illegal immigrants who meet certain **ID** requirements - but these cards would be good for operating a motor vehicle and little more. They would feature the disclaimer, "not valid for federal purposes."

So **Spitzer** held to his original goal of giving New York's 1 million illegal immigrants a legitimate way to drive, which makes sense. Otherwise hundreds of thousands will remain off the state's radar, driving without licenses or insurance, missing from the DMV database and invisible to law enforcement.

Advocates who object to second-class treatment for illegals are not facing up to the reality that these people live outside the laws of this country.

That said, **Spitzer**'s route to this better solution leaves a lot to be desired.

## SPITZER GETS REAL ON ID

After jamming through a controversial decision without public comment, he should have listened to reasonable criticism. Instead, he blasted Mayor Bloomberg for citing the conflicts with the **Real ID** Act. And he dismissed the idea of a two-tiered system as branding a "scarlet letter" on illegal immigrants.

Changing course was the right thing to do. Admitting it wouldn't hurt, either.

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