

February 14, 2005     The U.S. House of Representatives passed a national ID bill last week that masqueraded as “immigration reform.” The bill does nothing to address immigration policy, however, nor does it propose deporting a single illegal alien already in our country. It does nothing to address the porous border between the U.S. and Mexico, which is the fundamental problem. In reality, the bill is a Trojan horse. It pretends to offer desperately needed border control in order to con a credulous Congress into sacrificing more of our constitutionally protected liberty. Supporters claim the national ID scheme is voluntary. However, any state that opts out will automatically make non-persons out of its citizens. The citizens of that state will be unable to have any dealings with the federal government because their ID will not be accepted. They will not be able to fly or to take a train. In essence, in the eyes of the federal government they will cease to exist. It is absurd to call this voluntary, and the proponents of the national ID know that every state will have no choice but to comply. Federal legislation that nationalizes standards for drivers’ licenses and birth certificates creates a national ID system pure and simple. It is just a matter of time until those who refuse to carry the new licenses will be denied the ability to drive or board an airplane. Such domestic travel restrictions are the hallmark of authoritarian states, not free republics. This bill establishes a huge, centrally-coordinated database of highly personal information about American citizens: at a minimum their name, date of birth, place of residence, Social Security number, and physical and possibly other characteristics. The bill even provides for this sensitive information of American citizens to be shared with Canada and Mexico! Imagine a corrupt Mexican official selling thousands of identity files, including Social Security numbers, to criminals! This legislation gives authority to the Secretary of Homeland Security to expand required information on drivers’ licenses, potentially including such biometric information as retina scans, finger prints, DNA information, and even Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) radio tracking technology. Including such technology as RFID means the federal government, as well as the governments of Canada and Mexico, could know where American citizens are at all times. What will this mean for us? When this new program is implemented, every time we are required to show our drivers’ license we will, in fact, be showing a national identification card. We will be handing over a card that includes our personal and likely biometric information, information which is connected to a national and international database. This will further degrade our precious privacy, which is the hallmark of a civilized society. As Ayn Rand said, the “Savage’s whole existence is public.” A national ID card will have the same effect as gun control laws: criminals will ignore it, while law abiding people lose freedom. A national ID card offers us nothing more than a false sense of security, while moving us ever closer to a police state. The national ID proposal should die a well-deserved death in the Senate, and it should be denounced as authoritarian and anti-American.