

The Virgin Islands Consortium

US Virgin Islands Driver's License Good At Airport Security For Two More Years

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ST. CROIX -- Four days after Senator Novelle Francis [warned](#) that the territory needed to act fast in coming into compliance with a 10-year-old federal law mandating stricter driver's license requirements, intended to bolster national security, the Department of Homeland Security on Friday, January 8, announced that five states, along with the U.S. Virgin Islands, will have another two years to do so.

"Today I announce the schedule for the final phase of implementation of the REAL ID Act. Bottom line up front: Effective January 22, 2018, air travelers with a driver's license or identification card issued by a state that does not meet the requirements of the REAL ID Act (unless that state has been granted an extension to comply with the Act) must

present an alternative form of identification acceptable to the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in order to board a commercial domestic flight. Over the next two years, those states that are not REAL ID compliant are strongly encouraged to meet the requirements of the law for the benefit of their residents," said DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson in a [press release](#).

The news comes as a relief to residents who have not yet applied for their passports, as traveling with one's driver's license has been the norm for many. And it's a welcomed reassurance to Governor Kenneth Mapp, who requested an extension back in October of 2015, after the Bureau of Motor Vehicles fumbled its opportunity to implement the new requirements, even after spending over \$2 million on the project. According to BMV Director Lawrence Olive, there are problems with the software, developed by a company named BIZVI, that need to be rectified before implementation.

"The overall goal of the REAL ID Act passed by Congress is to prevent the fraudulent issuance and use of driver's licenses and identification cards, thereby ensuring the safety and security of the American public. Given today's threat environment, this requirement is as relevant now as it was when the 9/11 Commission recommended it," Mr. Johnson said.

Meanwhile, Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett issued a press release late Tuesday applauding the federal government's decision to extend.

"We are pleased that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has granted additional time to states and territories to become compliant with the REAL ID Act. Our office has had several meetings and has been in contact with DHS to ensure the territory received additional time to come in compliance," she said. "This extension will allow Virgin Islanders, who use their locally issued driver's license as their primary form of identification, the ability to continue using that form of identification to travel and access federal facilities in the country."