

FAQ for Cherokee Nation Citizens on Real ID and Tribal ID Cards

What is a REAL ID?

The REAL ID Act was passed by Congress in 2005, following the 9/11 Commission's recommendation that the federal government “set standards for the issuance of sources of identification, such as driver's licenses.” The Act establishes minimum security standards for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards and prohibits federal agencies from accepting licenses and identification cards from states that do not meet these standards for certain official purposes, including accessing certain federal facilities and boarding commercial aircraft.

When does the REAL ID Act go into effect? Will enforcement be delayed again?

Federal agencies are required to enforce the REAL ID Act beginning on May 7, 2025. We do not expect this enforcement will be delayed any further.

Will I be able to travel without a REAL ID?

Beginning May 7, 2025, every state and U.S. territory resident will need to present a REAL ID compliant license/ID, or another acceptable form of identification to board commercial aircraft. The card must be REAL ID compliant unless the resident is using an alternative acceptable document such as a passport or passport card, or state-issued Enhanced Driver's License.

Does my Tribal ID card need to be REAL ID compliant?

No; the REAL ID Act's identification requirements only “apply to States and U.S. territories that choose to issue driver's licenses and identification cards...” 6 C.F.R. § 37.1. Instead, photo IDs issued by a federally recognized Indian tribe should be accepted as an alternate identification.

However, [TSA guidance](#) indicates that tribal IDs that cannot be scanned by technology may be subject to additional scrutiny. If you have a Cherokee Nation ID without a scannable barcode, you may be asked to present a secondary identification that is REAL ID compliant. Alternatively, federal agents can manually inspect your tribal ID and cross-reference with the Federal Register to verify your identity.

With all the changes in identification requirements and the potentially additional scrutiny of Tribal IDs at TSA checkpoints, is Cherokee Nation doing anything to address this?

Yes. On December 6, 2024, Chief Hoskin issued an [executive order](#) establishing a task force on the citizen registration code and process. He empaneled a task force to examine a variety of citizenship issues including citizen photo IDs. The [task force's report is expected to be issued publicly this summer](#) and can serve as a basis for, among other things, changes to Cherokee Nation photo IDs.

How do I know if an ID is REAL ID compliant?

State-issued licenses or other state photo IDs that are compliant with REAL ID will have a star marking on the upper top portion of the card. If your state-issued photo ID does not have a star

marking, it is not REAL ID-compliant and won't be accepted as proof of identity to board commercial aircraft. Alternate forms of identification (such as your tribal photo ID) do not need to have a star marker to show compliance with REAL ID.

What will happen if I don't have a REAL ID?

Passengers who present a state-issued identification that is not REAL ID compliant and who do not have an acceptable alternative identification (such as your tribal photo ID) can expect to face delays, additional screening, and may be refused entry into the security checkpoint of an airport or certain federal facilities.

How do I get a REAL ID?

You may apply for a state-issued identification that meets the REAL ID requirements from the state in which you reside. For residents of Oklahoma, the [Service Oklahoma website](#) lists the required documents to obtain a REAL ID. At a minimum, you must provide documentation showing: 1) Full Legal Name; 2) Date of Birth; 3) Social Security Number; 4) Two Proofs of Address of Principal Residence; and 5) Lawful Status.