

From:

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Subject:

Confidential

Dear member:

I do have some good news to report related to our relationship with NGA. David Quam invited me to an NGA briefing on REAL ID this morning (almost all the states participated, along with several DHS officials) and gave me sufficient time on the agenda to explain our grant proposal and the verification hub concept.

It was an excellent opportunity to correct the misconception that AAMVA was about to propose that DHS give the association the entire \$79 million available in state grants (in fact, our proposal would have provided \$62 million to states and \$14 million to AAMVA to begin building the hub and also to help states connect). There were also a number of questions about the hub – how it would operate, who governs it, and how hub operation will be funded – however, almost all the questions were based on the assumption that a hub must be created.

In addition to presenting to the group and answering questions, I had an opportunity to talk one-on-one with several state representatives. I also had a chance to talk with David at the end of the meeting. Our discussion, and his candor during our REAL ID Steering Committee teleconference later in the day, are signs that we have a good working relationship with NGA, though I realize it is one that will likely require constant attention and communication on our part.

It was evident from the discussion that REAL ID is both a funding and a political issue. Much of the governors' concern is not with AAMVA, but with DHS. Governors feel that DHS should fund creating the verification hub, but from funds separate from state grant dollars. They also feel that DHS guidance on how states may invest grant dollars is too restricted.

Finally, NGA proposes that Congress “fix and fund” REAL ID, by providing \$4 billion to states over 5 years (beginning with a “significant down payment” of \$1 billion in the current appropriation cycle).

An NGA member asked if DHS considers a state request for extension beyond the May 11, 2008 compliance deadline is an indication of intent to comply with REAL ID. We heard directly from DHS many times since the final rule came out that an extension request was not a commitment to comply with REAL ID. Today, however, the agency's answer confirmed what Secretary Chertoff said about two weeks ago, that DHS considers extension requests are made “for the purposes of coming into compliance.”

Best regards,

Neil

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