

## Information Overload!

Someone send out an e-mail with a letter (purported to be real) about a person fed up with the Passport Bureau enough to write to them\*. I personally think the letter is bogus, but the writer hits several nails on the head, describing what's wrong with the bureaucratic maze we have to deal with. Face it, in this day and age, one entity or another routinely bombards us for information that duplicates, ad infinitum, the same things everyone else does! Are you as tired of it as I am? Why do we need so many forms of ID? I say, "Enough is enough!"

I'm enough of a libertarian to believe that there's too much government intrusion in all our lives every day. Hordes of proliferating bureaucracies irritate law-abiding citizens and seem to let the cretins, thieves and liars slip through the "cracks" in the system." Here's one solution I thought up on my own that makes sense to me. See if you agree.

While I don't think a National ID Card is a good idea on top of the current mess that exists today, how about a "Personal ID" card, issued at birth, instead? They could use a number similar to a Social Security number and add a photo, like on a driver's license, or passport. For further security, add a thumbprint and, as technology develops, voice recognition and retinal scans (the technology exists already!).

As you grow up, you add to it to keep it up to date with pertinent information, such as adding new photos. Want to drive? Get a "Driver's Addendum" added (yeah, I know it's a state privilege—just add it as is—no harm, no foul). Have healthcare? Get your insurer added (I'm not giving Medicare much longer). The upside of this is that, if you don't get healthcare insurance, the hospital has all that other good info to keep track of you. Foreign travel? A "Passport Addendum" would do the trick. See where this is going?

Get married; have kids? Have their IDs added and cross-filed with yours. Get a credit card(s)? Yep, add that/them too. Buy a house? Add mortgage information. You can add all the other "administrivia" as you would update your profile on websites you belong to, through the governmental agency that issues the card, including photos. With this form of ID (and face it, you need ID these days) you have one ID ONLY and not the raft of cards in your wallet. BUT, you have to do away with all the other entities, or this will be *yet another* annoyance. On the day that happens, we can inaugurate another national holiday—Freedom from Bureaucracy Day (Amen and hallelujah!) and have a bonfire in celebration using unnecessary paperwork. Heck, burning the paperwork on our current healthcare bill alone could supply thousands of communities across the country!

What with all the advances in scanning technology, it would be easy to use this card. Forget magnetic strips. Wherever you use the card—the store, the office, the DMV, anywhere your card is valid—someone needs but scan your card to get the information you need. Talk about cutting down on paperwork. Built-in security would disallow unauthorized scans.

Speaking of security, what with all the stuff that goes on computer today (and I can only see it increasing) that's always an issue, but are we really with what we have now? On an ongoing basis, businesses and governmental agencies are hammering out ever more sophisticated

techniques to secure data. Let's face it, in order to prevent an avalanche of paper from burying us, it's necessary. The upside would be that there would be only *one* entity to deal with and, with every business out there watching for fraud, it would certainly be no worse than what we've got today. Get Lifelock if you're worried—it seems to work well enough to secure you identity.

Now, as much as I dislike governmental methods, I suppose a necessary evil would be to have one, central, federal agency to manage this thing—not because Uncle Sam does a better job, but to avoid unnecessary duplication again. Set up checks and balances, a rotating, term-limited committee to manage the system and to avoid dreaded “entrenchment.” Hold unannounced “spot checks” every so often to check for security, using an outside agency, or agencies and make penalties and prison terms for abuse harsh and uncompromising enough to deter chicanery. Oh yeah, one more thing: all this information should be available to Joe and Jane citizen under the Freedom of Information Act.

Of course, I left out many issues and “what ifs?” I'm just one person, but I'm sure a panel of “experts” could fine-tune this, as long as it's crosschecked to eliminate duplication and unnecessary b. s. I'm cynical enough to realize that this will probably never happen, but I can dream, can't I?

Heck, how could it be worse than the info-disaster we have now!?

*\* Below is the version of the letter I got. I took the liberty to edit it a bit. I apologize for the somewhat rough language.*

Dear Sirs,

I'm in the process of renewing my passport, and still cannot believe this. How is it that Radio Shack has my address and telephone number and knows that I bought a TV from them back in 1987 and yet, the Federal Government is still asking me where I was born and on what date. For chrissake, do you guys do this *by hand*? My birth date you have on my Social Security card, and it's on all the income tax forms I've filed for the past 30 years. It's on my health insurance card, my driver's license, on the last eight damn passports I've had, on all those stupid customs declaration forms I've had to fill out before being allowed off the plane and all those insufferable census forms that are done at election times.

Would somebody please take note, once and for all, that my mother's name is Maryanne, my father's name is Robert and I'd be absolutely astounded if that ever changed between now and when I die!!! I apologize, I'm really pissed off this morning. Between you and me, I've had enough of this bullshit! You send the application to my house, then you ask me for my address? What's going on? Do you have a gang of Neanderthal asses working there! Look at my damn picture. Do I look like Bin Laden? I don't want to dig up Yasser Arafat, I just want to go and park my ass on a sandy beach. And would someone please tell me, why would you care whether I plan on visiting a farm in the next 15 days? If I ever got the urge to do something weird to a chicken or a goat, believe you me, I'd sure as hell not want to tell *anyone*!

Well, I have to go now, 'cause I have to go to the other end of the city and get another copy of my birth certificate, to the tune of \$60. Would it be so complicated to have all the services in the same spot to assist in the issuance of a new passport the same day? Nooo, that'd be too damn easy and maybe make sense. You'd rather have us running all over the place, like chickens with our heads cut off, then find some idiot to confirm that it's really me on the damn picture—you know, the one where we're not allowed to smile?! (Bureaucratic morons!) Hey, you know why we can't smile? We're totally pissed off!

Sincerely,

You Sure In The Hell Should Know Who I Am.

P.S. Remember, what I said above about the picture and getting someone to confirm that it's me? Well, my family has been in this country since, oh, around 1776; I have served in the military for something over 30 years and have had security clearances up the ying yang. However, I have to get someone "important" to verify who I am—you know, someone like my doctor, WHO WAS BORN AND RAISED IN INDIA! (And you want to run our health care system?!?)