

Following is statement of NCSL on Consular Cards (Matricula Cards)  
NCSL statement is not italicized and not underlined.

**Because the NCSL statement is factually incorrect, corrective comments have been added in underlined italics**

The statement is available at the NCSL website at  
<http://www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/consularids.htm>

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[NCSL Home](#) > [State & Federal Issues: Issue Areas](#) > [Immigrant Policy](#) >  [Consular Identification](#)

## Consulate Identification Cards

April 28, 2004

The Mexican government issues identification cards through its consulates to Mexican nationals living abroad. These cards are known as matrícula consular cards or matrículas (meaning "Certificate of Consular Registration"). The cards help Mexico to keep track of its citizens for consular, tax purposes and the census, and to provide citizens living outside Mexico a form of identification. The card can be used to re-enter Mexico. The card does not prove legal immigration status, eligibility for public benefits, or eligibility to work in the United States.

**[FACT: The cards are ONLY issued to illegal aliens to help them evade US immigration law. Any person LEGALLY in the US has a valid passport with US visa, or green card, or other document issued by the US government.]**

Other countries are also considering the issuance of government identification cards in the U.S. Guatemala began issuing its own card in 2002 and Peru, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Poland and Brazil are considering the cards. **[FACT: They are doing this to help illegal aliens from those countries evade US law.]**

Public response to the cards has been mixed. Proponents believe the identity cards are beneficial by encouraging unauthorized immigrants to work with law enforcement and financial institutions. Opponents believe the card promotes illegal immigration and that the cards can be easily forged.

### What are the Requirements?

In order to receive a consulate card, applicants must appear in person and present an original birth certificate to prove Mexican nationality, a government-issued photo I.D. to prove identity, proof of address under the same name, a telephone number, next of kin information, and an original marriage certificate (for women wishing to use their married names). The cards contain name, date, and place of birth, U.S. address, a current photograph, a signature, and the telephone number of the local Mexican

consulate office. Matrículas cost \$25-30 dollars and are valid for five years. To replace a lost or stolen card, the applicant must provide a police report.

In 2002, Mexican consulates began issuing cards with additional security measures. Anti-forging features include: patterned security paper; an "advantage seal" over the photograph that changes color in natural light; and some features that require florescent, infrared light, or a high-tech decoder to be seen.

Mexico has issued 1.7 million high security consulate cards. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintains a centralized database; consulates in the U.S. anticipate the ability to access the database in 2004.

**[FACT: On June 26, 2003 the FBI testified before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims. Following are extracts from the FBI's testimony:**

**"The Department of Justice and the FBI have concluded that THE MATRICULA CONSULAR IS NOT A RELIABLE FORM OF IDENTIFICATION, due to the non-existence of any means of verifying the true identity of the card holder..."**

**"...THE GOVERNMENT OF MEXICO HAS NO CENTRALIZED DATABASE to coordinate the issuance of consular ID cards. This allows MULTIPLE CARDS CAN BE ISSUED under the same name, the same address, or with the same photograph... Mexico has NO INTERCONNECTED DATABASES TO PROVIDE INTRA-CONSULAR COMMUNICATION to be able to verify who has or has not applied for or received a consular ID card.**

**"...Mexico ISSUES THE CARD TO ANYONE WHO CAN PRODUCE A MEXICAN BIRTH CERTIFICATE...MEXICAN BIRTH CERTIFICATES ARE EASY TO FORGE and they are a major item on the product list of the fraudulent document trade currently flourishing across the country and around the world. A September 2002 bust of a document production operation in Washington state illustrated the size of this trade. A huge cache of fake Mexican birth certificates was discovered. It is our belief that the primary reason a market for these birth certificates exists is the demand for fraudulently-obtained Matricula Consular cards.**

**"... in some locations. WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL SEEKING A MATRICULA CONSULAR IS UNABLE TO PRODUCE ANY DOCUMENTS WHATSOEVER, HE WILL STILL BE ISSUED a Matricula Consular by the Mexican consular official, if he fills out a questionnaire and satisfies the official that he is who he purports to be." ]**

### **Federal Action**

*U.S. Treasury Department.* The Patriot Act of 2001 (P.L. 107-56) required minimum standards for identification and verification of persons who apply to open an account at a financial institution, to address terrorist financing and money laundering. Financial institutions must have a customer identification program for all new accounts, US citizens and foreign nationals alike, that includes name, address, date of birth and taxpayer identification number. In addition, financial institutions must verify the identity of any person who opens an account; maintain records of the information; and consult government lists of known or suspected terrorists or terrorist organizations. Acceptable identification documents for foreign nationals include: "a passport number and country of issuance; an alien identification card number; or the number and country of issuance of any other government-issued document evidencing nationality or residence and bearing a photograph or similar safeguard." Financial institutions may make risk based assessments for alternate identification; many accept the matricula as one of two forms of required ID. In July, 2003, Treasury published a notice of inquiry on its proposed rules to determine whether financial institutions should be prohibited from accepting foreign government issued identification documents other than passports. The Treasury Department found no new information submitted in the comments and declined to prohibit the use of consular IDs.

The Internal Revenue Service accepts matrículas with a second identification for issuing individual tax identification numbers (ITIN). The ITIN is issued to individuals who must file income tax returns and are not eligible for a social security number (for example, an individual with earned income or who is listed as a spouse or dependent on the tax return of a U.S. citizen.)

**[FACT: The IRS has issued an order stating that ITINS are not to be used as identification, because they are issued based on unreliable "breeder documents" such as Mexican matricula cards.]**

### **Financial Institutions**

Approximately 70 banks and 56 credit unions, including Citibank, Bank of America, US Bancorp, and Wells Fargo, accept the matrícula as a form of identification. Financial institutions have begun to

recognize the potential market of these consumers, who operate primarily in a cash economy. Customers must provide a second form of ID and either a Social Security number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

#### **Law Enforcement**

Police and sheriff departments – estimated to number 800 nationwide – accept the matrícula as a form of identification. They support matrículas for community policing purposes and crime prevention: Mexicans who have them are more likely to report crimes, and by allowing immigrants to open bank accounts, they are also less likely to be victims of theft or robbery. Matrículas also provide identification in case of accidents or fatalities, and provide a way to notify the next of kin.

**[FACT: Enormous well organized lobbying efforts funded in part by the Ford Foundation have been behind the acceptance of matricula cards. The Fraternal Order of Police, America's largest union of police officers opposes their recognition.]**

#### **State And Local Government**

Ten states currently accept the consulate card or other foreign ID in issuing driver's license as a primary or secondary proof of identity or residence (Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wisconsin). Tennessee and Nevada accept the matrícula as a form of ID, except for driver's licenses. Colorado prohibits public agencies from accepting foreign identity documents that aren't recognized by the U.S. government, with exceptions for criminal investigations, services for children born in the U.S., and emergency medical services.

Approximately 80 city governments accept matrículas, allowing card holders to use public libraries, obtain business licenses, and register children for school.

**[FACT: In all cases, recognition of matricula cards has resulted from intense lobbying efforts by those who profit from illegal immigration.]**