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As a transgender American living abroad without dual citizenship, I am nervous about needing my passport renewed. I am nervous about going back to the US in case my passport gets confiscated, a rumor/hearsay that is currently going around the internet--probably not true but seemly possible in the future. I am nervous about ever having to travel to the Middle East for work or study if the same policies are in place when I need to renew my passport in a few years. I am nervous about renewing my passport and having the only federally issued identification from my country of origin being at odds with my European-issued residency permit, and I am anxious about the international bureaucracy this may entail, especially if I decide to get my birth certificate reissued with my sex marker updated to reflect my gender/current secondary sexual characteristics.

The situation this puts me in is potentially dangerous and compromises my right to self-identify and to travel without being harassed. It makes travel, migration, and work more difficult than for non-transgender citizens. It identifies trans individuals whenever they need to provide federal documentation, whether to the local police or at the airport. My previous passports have afforded me the ability to travel without these anxieties, but that will all change in a few years.

This new system more readily identifies trans individuals without having to comb through previous birth certificates and issued passports in the database. It takes a (sometimes) invisible minority status and makes an individual's transgender status abundantly apparent to the government and to anyone checking the individual's documents. With recent ICE raids, although a separate issue, citizens in some states have been advised to carry their birth certificates and IDs. If this ID is a recently issued transgender passport, it will make the individual vulnerable to further discrimination based on their now apparent transgender status. Although for most people, a gender marker is just a letter, which can make a trans person feel validated, it also plays a larger role in ensuring the protection of the human rights of trans people, already afforded to every other US citizen, both abroad and domestically.