

**RCW 46.16A.030 Registration and display of plates required—
Penalties—Expired registration, impoundment.** (1) Vehicles must be registered as required by this chapter and must display license plates or decals assigned by the department.

(2) It is unlawful for a person to operate any vehicle on a public highway of this state without having in full force and effect a current and proper vehicle registration and displaying license plates on the vehicle.

(3) Vehicle license plates or registration certificates, whether original issues or duplicates, may not be issued or furnished by the department until the applicant makes satisfactory application for a certificate of title or presents satisfactory evidence that a certificate of title covering the vehicle has been previously issued.

(4) Failure to make initial registration before operating a vehicle on the public highways of this state is a traffic infraction. A person committing this infraction must pay a fine of five hundred twenty-nine dollars, which may not be suspended or reduced. This fine is in addition to any delinquent taxes and fees that must be deposited and distributed in the same manner as if the taxes and fees were properly paid in a timely fashion. The five hundred twenty-nine dollar fine must be deposited into the vehicle licensing fraud account created in the state treasury in RCW 46.68.250.

(5) Failure to renew an expired registration before operating a vehicle on the public highways of this state is a traffic infraction.

(6) It is a gross misdemeanor for a resident, as identified in RCW 46.16A.140, to register a vehicle in another state, evading the payment of any tax or vehicle license fee imposed in connection with registration. It is punishable, in lieu of the fine in subsection (4) of this section, as follows:

(a) For a first offense:

(i) Up to three hundred sixty-four days in the county jail;

(ii) Payment of a fine of five hundred twenty-nine dollars plus any applicable assessments, which may not be suspended or reduced. The fine of five hundred twenty-nine dollars must be deposited into the vehicle licensing fraud account created in the state treasury in RCW 46.68.250;

(iii) A fine of one thousand dollars to be deposited into the vehicle licensing fraud account created in the state treasury in RCW 46.68.250, which may not be suspended or reduced; and

(iv) The delinquent taxes and fees, which must be deposited and distributed in the same manner as if the taxes and fees were properly paid in a timely fashion, and which may not be suspended or reduced;

(b) For a second or subsequent offense:

(i) Up to three hundred sixty-four days in the county jail;

(ii) Payment of a fine of five hundred twenty-nine dollars plus any applicable assessments, which may not be suspended or reduced, except as provided in RCW 10.05.180. The fine of five hundred twenty-nine dollars must be deposited into the vehicle licensing fraud account created in the state treasury in RCW 46.68.250;

(iii) A fine of five thousand dollars to be deposited into the vehicle licensing fraud account created in the state treasury in RCW 46.68.250, which may not be suspended or reduced; and

(iv) The amount of delinquent taxes and fees, which must be deposited and distributed in the same manner as if the taxes and fees were properly paid in a timely fashion, and which may not be suspended or reduced.

(7) A vehicle with an expired registration of more than forty-five days parked on a public street may be impounded by a police officer under RCW 46.55.113(2). [2019 c 459 § 3; 2019 c 423 § 203. Prior: 2011 c 171 § 43; 2011 c 96 § 31; prior: 2010 c 270 § 1; 2010 c 217 § 5; 2010 c 161 § 403; 2007 c 242 § 2; 2006 c 212 § 1; prior: 2005 c 350 § 1; 2005 c 323 § 2; 2005 c 213 § 6; prior: 2003 c 353 § 8; 2003 c 53 § 238; 2000 c 229 § 1; 1999 c 277 § 4; prior: 1997 c 328 § 2; 1997 c 241 § 13; 1996 c 184 § 1; 1993 c 238 § 1; 1991 c 163 § 1; 1989 c 192 § 2; 1986 c 186 § 1; 1977 ex.s. c 148 § 1; 1973 1st ex.s. c 17 § 2; 1972 ex.s. c 5 § 2; 1969 c 27 § 3; 1967 c 202 § 2; 1963 ex.s. c 3 § 51; 1961 ex.s. c 21 § 32; 1961 c 12 § 46.16.010; prior: 1955 c 265 § 1; 1947 c 33 § 1; 1937 c 188 § 15; Rem. Supp. 1947 § 6312-15; 1929 c 99 § 5; RRS § 6324. Formerly RCW 46.16.010.]

Rules of court: Monetary penalty schedule—IRLJ 6.2.

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 2019 c 423 § 203 and by 2019 c 459 § 3, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Finding—Intent—2019 c 459: See note following RCW 10.05.180.

Finding—Intent—Effective date—2019 c 423: See notes following RCW 82.08.0273.

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Findings—Intent—2011 c 96: See note following RCW 9A.20.021.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Effective date—2005 c 350: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [May 9, 2005]." [2005 c 350 § 2.]

Declaration and intent—2005 c 323: "When a person establishes residency in this state, unless otherwise exempt by statute, the person must register any vehicles to be operated on public highways, and pay all required licensing fees and taxes. Washington residents must renew vehicle registrations annually as well. The intent of this act is to increase the monetary penalties associated with failure to properly register vehicles in the state of Washington." [2005 c 323 § 1.]

Effective date—2005 c 323: "This act takes effect August 1, 2005." [2005 c 323 § 4.]

Application—2005 c 323: "This act applies to registrations due or to become due on or after January 1, 2006." [2005 c 323 § 5.]

Findings—Construction—Effective date—2005 c 213: See notes following RCW 46.09.300.

Effective date—2003 c 353: See note following RCW 46.04.320.

Intent—Effective date—2003 c 53: See notes following RCW 2.48.180.

Effective date—2000 c 229: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 30, 2000]." [2000 c 229 § 9.]

Effective date—1996 c 184 §§ 1-6: "Sections 1 through 6 of this act take effect January 1, 1997." [1996 c 184 § 8.]

Legislative intent—1989 c 192: "The legislature recognizes that there are residents of this state who intentionally register motor vehicles in other states to evade payment of taxes and fees required by the laws of this state. This results in a substantial loss of revenue to the state. It is the intent of the legislature to impose a stronger criminal penalty upon those residents who defraud the state, thereby enhancing compliance with the registration laws of this state and further enhancing enforcement and collection efforts.

In order to encourage voluntary compliance with the registration laws of this state, administrative penalties associated with failing to register a motor vehicle are waived until September 1, 1989. It is not the intent of the legislature to waive traffic infraction or criminal traffic violations imposed prior to July 23, 1989." [1989 c 192 § 1.]

Effective date—1989 c 192 § 2: "Section 2 of this act shall take effect September 1, 1989." [1989 c 192 § 3.]