

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5270

As of February 1, 2021

Title: An act relating to improving access to department of licensing issued documents by extending the issuance period of driver licenses and identicards to eight years, allowing online issuance and renewal of instruction permits, and expanding online renewal of driver licenses and identicards.

Brief Description: Improving access to department of licensing issued documents by extending the issuance period of driver licenses and identicards to eight years, allowing online issuance and renewal of instruction permits, and expanding online renewal of driver licenses and identicards.

Sponsors: Senators Liias, King, Das, Holy, Mullet, Nguyen, Nobles, Randall, Saldaña, Wilson, C. and Wilson, J.; by request of Department of Licensing.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/01/21.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the cycle for standard and enhanced driver's licenses, standard and enhanced identicards, commercial driver's licenses, and motorcycle endorsements from six years to eight years.
- Provides for remote photo and signature capture for driver's license and identicard renewals.
- Allows online issuance and renewal of non-photo driver's instruction permits.
- Allows driver's licenses and identicards to be renewed online anytime, and specifies that photos must be updated at least every 16 years.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: Driver's Licenses, Identicards, Endorsements, and Driver's Instruction Permits. The Department of Licensing (DOL) is authorized to issue several instruments, such as driver's licenses—standard, enhanced, and commercial, identicards, driver's instruction permits, and motorcycle endorsements, that are related to driving vehicles and providing official identification of individuals. The fees and documentation required for application of the identifying and authorizing instruments vary, but the instruments are generally valid up to six years for qualifying applicants. Driver's instruction permits are valid up to one year. During in-person visits, DOL takes photos of applicants for licenses and some identicards.

Applications for a new license or instruction permit must be signed before an agent authorized to administer oaths, meaning that an in-person visit to a DOL office is required. Renewals for driver's licenses and identicards can be made in person, but they may also be made online, as long as the last renewal was not made online. A renewal for an instruction permit must be made in person, and a renewal for an identicard without a photo must also be made in person.

Emergency Executive Orders & Response to COVID-19. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, DOL driver licensing offices were closed for several months for all non-commercial driver licensing services starting at the end of March 2020. DOL began reopening driver licensing offices in June 2020, and are open by appointment only with every other counter closed to allow for social distancing. Appointments are available for scheduling 30 days in advance.

In response to DOL's limited capacity for in-person services, the Governor issued and extended proclamations allowing DOL to issue a no-photo instruction permit online, renew driver's instruction permits online, and provide expanded online renewals for driver's licenses and identicards. These are temporary measures.

Summary of Bill: Driver's licenses, commercial driver's licenses, identicards, and motorcycle endorsements are valid for eight years. Online renewals of driver's licenses and identicards are no longer restricted to every other renewal cycle, including non-photo driver's instruction permits. The following fees are adjusted to reflect the new renewal terms, though per-year costs remain unchanged.

Category	Per Year Cost	Current 6 Year Cost	Proposed 8 Year Cost
Standard driver's license/identicard	\$9	\$54	\$72
Enhanced driver's license/Enhanced identicard*	\$4	\$24	\$32

Motorcycle endorsement - initial*	\$2	\$12	\$16
Motorcycle endorsement - renewal*	\$5	\$30	\$40
Commercial driver license*	\$17	\$102	\$136

* The standard driver's license/identocard fee must be paid in addition to the fee amounts on this row.

DOL is authorized to capture photographs and signatures remotely for driver's licenses and identicards eliminating the need for in person renewals. Photographs for renewed driver's licenses and identicards need be updated only every 16 years. A sworn statement must be signed by the applicant before someone authorized to administer oaths, only for original driver license issuances.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This takes the good parts of changing licensing operations during the pandemic and places them into statute. This will help address the licensing backlog and deal with the reduced licensing service office capacity. The online renewal capabilities will make it more convenient for public and increases access. The intent is not to reduce jobs, but provide DOL the needed tools to address their backlog and operate more efficiently. It could take over five years to get back equilibrium based on current capacity. This bill will help us address that backlog within next 18 months. The online photo submittal has security features to make sure the picture matches the person receiving their license. The added benefit from all of this is individuals struggle to come into the licensing offices now will have better access to these critical licensing services. This takes the good parts of changing licensing operations during the pandemic and places them into statute. This will help address the licensing backlog and deal with the reduced licensing service office capacity.

CON : The automated online renewal aspects are especially problematic, and the changes might not actually reduce the backlog. By removing the security screening from the representatives in the offices, this will reduce public safety. Additionally, the elimination of the screening function means people that should be ordered for reexamination will not be and this will diminish public safety. This will also reduce the jobs from the licensing service office staff. This is an overreaction to temporary problem. There other alternatives, such as expanding the types of transactions allowed under the Governor's proclamation. As a result of errors or problems with the online transactions, this could still result in people

having to come into licensing office and increasing transaction times. The change from six to eight years for licenses means officers will not have the updated information to do their jobs. Despite the facial recognition and other measures, the ability to submit pictures online could still allow fraud or manipulation.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Marko Liias, Prime Sponsor; Beau Perschbacher, Department of Licensing; Joseph Giammona, The Driver Training Group, Inc.

CON: James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Karen Estevenin, PROTEC17; Alexis Young, PROTEC17.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.