

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1212

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to the extension of the validity of a driver's license that expires while the driver is outside the state or where the driver is a spouse or dependent child of a member of the armed forces.

Brief Description: Extending certain drivers' licenses for out-of-state licensees.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Transportation (Originally sponsored by Representatives Eickmeyer, Clements, Mielke, Benson, Veloria, Haigh, O'Brien, Doumit, Murray, Anderson, Conway, Constantine, Fisher, Hatfield, Dunshee, H. Sommers and Kenney).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/20/99, 1/25/99 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/19/99, 95-0.

Passed Senate: 4/13/99, 45-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Driver's licenses for military spouses and dependents remain in effect as long as the military member remains in the service.
- The Department of Licensing may extend or renew driver's licenses for persons who are outside the state when their license expires.
- If a person's license is extended or renewed while they are out-of-state, the person must go to a driver's license office for an eye exam within 60 days of his or her return to Washington.
- Bill applies retroactively to persons whose licenses expired between January 1, 1998 and the effective date of the bill.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Fisher, Democratic Co-Chair; K. Schmidt, Republican Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic 1st Vice Chair; Edwards, Democratic 2nd Vice Chair; Ericksen, Republican Vice Chair; Hankins, Republican Vice Chair; G. Chandler; DeBolt; Fortunato; Haigh; Hatfield; Hurst; Lovick; McDonald; Mielke; Mitchell; Ogden; Pflug; Radcliff; Romero; Schindler; Schual-Berke; Scott; Skinner and Wood.

Staff: Paul Neal (786-7315).

Background:

Under current law, there is no provision for extending the term of a driver's license that expires while the person is outside the state. The only exception to this is members of the military, whose driver's licenses remain in effect as long as they are on active duty.

Some persons who are outside the state find it difficult or impossible to return to the state to renew their license. Examples include dependents of military persons stationed overseas. In many cases, retaining a valid U.S. license is a requirement for being allowed to drive in the guest country without having to undergo driver's education and testing in the foreign country.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) had an informal policy of granting license extensions or renewals in situations where persons were unable to return to the state before their license expired. The attorney general's office determined that the department did not have authority to grant those extensions or renewals. In response to attorney general advice, the department discontinued its practice effective September 1, 1998. Persons whose licenses have expired since that time have been unable to renew their licenses, with the result that they have lost the ability to drive in the host country.

Summary of Bill:

The bill extends the exemption from driver's license renewal requirements currently enjoyed by members of the military to spouses and dependents. For persons who are not military spouses or dependents, the bill codifies the prior DOL policy by allowing the department to:

- Extend the driver's license for persons who will be out of the state for 12 months or less after the expiration date; or
- Renew the driver's license for persons who are out of the state for more than 12 months after the expiration date.

The department is authorized to charge an additional fee of \$5 for the service. The bill applies retroactively to persons whose licenses expired between the time that DOL discontinued its policy and the effective date of the bill. The statutory late renewal fee is waived for persons covered by the retroactive provisions of the bill. If a person's license is extended or renewed while he or she is out-of-state, the person must go to a driver's license office for an eye exam within 60 days of his or her return to Washington.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: (original bill) This bill is needed so that Washington residents who are outside the state, particularly those who are outside the country, for extended periods of time can retain their driving privilege until they have an opportunity to return to the state.

Testimony Against: (original bill) None.

Testified: (support with concerns) Judith Giniger, Department of Licensing.