
Transportation Committee

3SSB 5412

Brief Description: Requiring biometric identifiers from applicants for driver's licenses and identicards.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Highways & Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Brandland, Kline, Winsley, Haugen, Prentice, Reardon, Rasmussen, Eide and McCaslin).

Brief Summary of Third Substitute Bill

- Increases the civil liability for identity theft from \$500 to \$1000, or actual damages, whichever is greater.
- Requires the Department of Licensing to implement a voluntary biometric matching system for driver's licenses and identicards.

Hearing Date: 3/1/04

Staff: Jill Satran (786-7315).

Background:

Identity theft occurs when someone appropriates another person's personal information, without that person's knowledge, to commit fraud or theft. A common piece of personal information that is used to commit this crime is a fraudulently issued driver's license. Currently, an individual who commits identity theft in the first or second degree is subject to criminal sanctions and is liable for civil damages of \$500 or actual damages, whichever is greater.

Most U.S. states are investigating the use of biometric technologies to reduce fraud and improve efficiency in driver's license and ID card (DL/ID) issuance operations. Biometric technology can verify the identity of individuals based on their unique physical characteristics. Biometrics software takes photographs or scans of physical features such as facial features, retinas or fingerprints and quantifies that information into mathematical algorithms. Facial biometrics quantify the distances between major points such as the eyes, nose or temples, and fingerprint biometrics quantifies the distances between branches and endpoints of the ridges. Once the information is stored, scans of the thumb or other physical features can be cross-checked with existing databases to verify identity.

- One-to-one biometric technology allows an individual's identifying characteristics to be matched against previously stored characteristics for the same individual to determine whether the individual is the same person.

- One-to-many biometric technology would allow the Department of Licensing to check a new driver license or identocard applicant against a database of other drivers to ensure that the individual is not already licensed elsewhere or under another name.

The Department of Licensing currently records customer signatures and facial images but does not have the authority to convert this data for possible use as a biometric measure.

Summary of Bill:

The civil liability for committing identity theft in the first or second degree is increased from \$500 to \$1,000 or actual damages, whichever is greater.

The Department of Licensing must implement a highly accurate one-to-many and one-to-one biometric matching system by January 1, 2006. When the biometric driver's license and identocard system is established, the department must allow every person applying for an original, renewal, or duplicate driver's license or identocard the option of submitting a biometric identifier. A fee of up to \$2 may be charged to add a biometric identifier to a driver's license or identocard.

The Department of Licensing may not disclose biometric information to the public or any governmental entity except when authorized by court order.

Sections 1, 3, 4 and 5 of this bill are null and void if funding is not provided for the implementation of the bill in the transportation appropriations act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect July 1, 2004.