

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5795

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Elections, March 4, 2003

Title: An act relating to drivers' licenses issued to those serving in the armed forces.

Brief Description: Extending terms of drivers' licenses for armed forces reservists.

Sponsors: Senators Schmidt, Reardon, Swecker, Oke, Winsley, Kastama, Roach, Keiser, Zarelli, Rasmussen, Franklin, Shin, Brandland, Sheahan, Hewitt, Honeyford, Benton, Hale and Mulliken.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 2/28/03, 3/4/03 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Stevens, Vice Chair; Fairley, Horn, Kastama, McCaslin and Reardon.

Staff: Ronda Larson (786-7429)

Background: 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 host country without having to undergo driver's education and testing in the foreign country.

Members of the military and their spouses and dependents receive an exemption from driver's license renewal requirements. The definition of members of the military for purposes of the driver's license statute excludes, among others, members of the Coast Guard and reservists who have not been called up for at least 180 days total.

Summary of Bill: The definition of service member is expanded for purposes of the driver's license renewal waiver. The new definition includes those serving in the armed forces reserves, National Guard, or Coast Guard, regardless of whether or not they have been called into federal service by a presidential select reserve call up.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The bill clarifies language in last year's veterans bill, and thereby conforms the statute's language with last year's intent. All reservists go through the same health screening as active duty personnel, so the bill would not enable these people to avoid having their eyesight checked.

Testimony Against: Under the current military exemption from driver's license renewal, there are 80,000 people who can avoid having their eyesight checked yet still keep their driver's license current. This bill would extend that to another 60,000.

Testified: Senator Schmidt, prime sponsor (pro); Derek Goudriaan, Department of Licensing (con).