

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1224

As Reported by House Committee On:
Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

Title: An act relating to law enforcement access to driver's license photographs for the purposes of identity verification.

Brief Description: Allowing law enforcement access to driver's license photographs for the purposes of identity verification.

Sponsors: Representatives Klippert, O'Brien, Ross, Pearson, Hurst, Hope and Herrera.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness: 2/3/09, 2/11/09 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Licensing to make their negative picture files available to enforcement agencies to help in verifying a person's identity.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Hurst, Chair; O'Brien, Vice Chair; Pearson, Ranking Minority Member; Klippert, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Goodman, Kirby and Ross.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841)

Background:

The Department of Licensing (DOL) maintains a negative database that contains the negatives of all pictures taken by the DOL. Examining the negative files is authorized under limited circumstances. The negatives are not available for public inspection. However, the negative files must be made available to the Secretary of State to assist in the maintenance of the state voter registration database. The DOL may also make the negative files available to government enforcement agencies to assist in the investigation of criminal activity as well as to a driver's next of kin in the event that the driver is deceased.

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

The negative files are generally not available to a law enforcement officer during a routine traffic stop for a violation of a traffic code.

Summary of Bill:

The DOL is authorized to make their negative picture files available to governmental enforcement agencies to assist in the purpose of verifying a person's identity.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The DOL already has these pictures online but there is limited authorization on who can view these pictures. When the Legislature passed the enhanced driver's license bill several years ago, authority to have access to picture negatives was given to border patrol agents.

These pictures would be lawfully available to law enforcement officers for purposes of identifying the people that they are regularly encountering. There have been many occasions when a law enforcement officer has been given a false name. In addition, identity theft has been a huge issue in Washington and warrants have been incorrectly issued for the wrong person because an offender's identity could not be readily verified.

Currently all law enforcement officers have laptops in their vehicles. The identity of who an officer is dealing with is the first thing that officers want to establish. This bill provides a visual tool to law enforcement officers to aid them in determining and verifying the identity of people they come in contact with for official purposes only.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Klippert, prime sponsor; Don Pierce, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Dusty Pierpoint, Lacey Police Department; and Dan Kimball, Thurston County Sheriff's Office.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.