
Transportation Committee

SSB 5591

Brief Description: Concerning confidential license plates, drivers' licenses, identicards, and vessel registrations.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Eide, King and Shin; by request of Department of Licensing).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Licensing to issue confidential drivers' licenses and identicards.
- Provides certain measures to protect the confidential nature of these licenses and identicards.

Hearing Date: 3/20/13

Staff: Andrew Russell (786-7143).

Background:

The Department of Licensing (DOL) is responsible for, among other things, issuing driver's licenses, identicards, and vehicle registrations. Generally, an applicant must provide his or her name and address when applying for a driver's license or identicard and when registering a vehicle. Falsifying information on such an application is a gross misdemeanor. Similarly, when registering a vessel with the DOL, the applicant must provide his or her name and address. After completing an application to register a vehicle, the DOL will issue a license plate to that applicant.

The DOL may issue confidential or undercover license plates to law enforcement agencies, statewide elected officials, certain public employees when it is recommended by the Washington State Patrol (WSP), and the State Treasurer in order to transport state funds or negotiable securities. The use of confidential license plates by a state law enforcement agency is limited to confidential, investigative, or undercover work; confidential public health work; and public

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assistance fraud or support investigations. Undercover license plate records show fictitious names and addresses on all the DOL records that are subject to public disclosure. Confidential license plate records, however, show the government agency name and address on all the DOL records that are subject to disclosure.

Summary of Bill:

The DOL is authorized to issue confidential driver's licenses and identicards to law enforcement officers in order for the officer to carry out undercover or covert law enforcement activities. Additionally, the bill requires that the DOL investigate the conviction record of any employee who has access to information related to the issuance of a confidential license plate, identification, or vessel registration when that information may reveal the identity of an individual or the nature of that individual's work. Finally, records related to confidential license plates, drivers' licenses, identicards, and vessel registrations are exempt from public disclosure. The total number of such issuances, however, may still be released.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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