
Transportation Committee

HB 2067

Brief Description: Prohibiting the disclosure of certain individual vehicle and vessel owner information of those participating in the address confidentiality program.

Sponsors: Representatives Davis, Chambers, Jinkins, Dufault, Riccelli, Doglio, Tarleton, Kilduff and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits the Department of Licensing (DOL), county auditors, or agencies or firms authorized by the DOL from releasing a vehicle or vessel owner's information if the owner is a participant in the Address Confidentiality Program.

Hearing Date: 2/26/19

Staff: Patricia Hasan (786-7292).

Background:

Address Confidentiality Program.

The Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) allows victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, or stalking to have an alternative address designated as his or her substitute mailing address. The ACP also allows state and local agencies to comply with requests for public records without disclosing the confidential location of a victim.

In order to become a participant in the ACP, a person must submit an application to the Secretary of State (Secretary). The Secretary must approve an application if it is filed in the manner and on the form prescribed by the Secretary and if it includes:

- a sworn statement from the applicant that:
 - he or she is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, or stalking, and that the applicant fears for his or her safety or his or her children's safety; or

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- the minor or incapacitated person on whose behalf the application is made is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, or stalking, and that the applicant fears for the safety of the minor or incapacitated person; or
- he or she, as a criminal justice participant, is a target for threats or harassment;
- a designation of the Secretary as the applicant's agent for purposes of service of process and receipt of mail;
- the mailing address and phone number where the applicant can be contacted by the Secretary;
- the address that the applicant requests be kept confidential; and
- the applicant's signature.

Applicants are certified as program participants for four years, subject to renewal, withdrawal, or invalidation.

An ACP participant may request that state and local agencies use the address designated by the Secretary as his or her address. When creating a new public record, state and local agencies are required to accept the address designated by the Secretary as the participant's substitute address, unless the Secretary has determined that the agency has a bona fide statutory or administrative requirement for the use of the address which would otherwise be confidential, and the address will be used only for those statutory or administrative purposes.

A participant who is qualified to vote may apply to receive ongoing absentee ballots for all elections in the jurisdiction for which that participant resides. The county auditor is required to send absentee ballots to the participant at the address designated by the participant in his or her absentee ballot application. The county auditor may not release the participant's address pursuant to a public records request except when the request is by a law enforcement agency or pursuant to court order. The name and address of a program participant is excluded from any list of registered voters available to the public.

Other than the alternate address designated by the Secretary, information in the participant's file is not subject to disclosure except in the following circumstances:

- if the request is made by a law enforcement agency; and
 - the participant's application contains no indication that he or she has been a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking perpetrated by a law enforcement employee; and
 - the request is in accordance with official law enforcement duties and is in writing on official law enforcement letterhead stationery and signed by the law enforcement agency's chief officer; or
- if directed by a court order; and
 - the request is made by a nonlaw enforcement agency; or
 - the participant's file indicates he or she has reason to believe he or she is a victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking perpetrated by a law enforcement employee; or
- if an officer of the Washington State Patrol requests the information to locate an applicant because the law enforcement officer believes that the applicant is in an emergency situation that involves the risk of death or serious physical harm and requires disclosure without delay of information relating to the emergency.

A court order for a participant's information may only be issued upon a probable cause finding by a judicial officer that the release of the participant's information is legally necessary in the course of a criminal investigation or prosecution or to prevent immediate risk to a minor.

The Secretary may cancel a person's participation in the ACP if the participant's residential address changes and he or she fails to give the Secretary at least two days' prior notice in writing of the change of address, or if mail forwarded by the Secretary to the participant is returned as nondeliverable, refused, or unclaimed. The Secretary must cancel a person's participation in the ACP if the participant changes his or her legal name or if the participant provides false information in the application.

Disclosure of Vehicle and Vessel Owner Information.

The DOL, county auditors, or agencies or firms authorized by the DOL may not release the name or address of a vehicle or vessel owner, except if:

- the requesting party is a business entity that requests the information for use in the course of business;
- the request is a written request that includes the full legal name and address of the requesting party, the specific purpose for the use of the information, and the signature of the requester; and
- the requester enters into a disclosure agreement with the DOL in which the requester promises that they will use the information only for the purpose stated in the written request, and that the requester does not intent to use, or facilitate the use of, the information for the purpose of making any unsolicited business contact with a person named in the disclosed information.

If both a mailing address and residence address are recorded on the vehicle or vessel record and are different, only the mailing address will be disclosed. Both addresses will be disclosed in response to information requests from courts, law enforcement agencies, or government entities with enforcement, investigative, or taxing authority, and the disclosed information may only be used by the agency in the normal course of conducting their business.

If a requester is an attorney or private investigator, and the request for information has been granted, the disclosing entity must provide notice to the vehicle or vessel owner named in the requested information that the request has been granted. The notice may only include: (1) that the disclosing entity has disclosed the vehicle or vessel owner's name and address; (2) the date that the disclosure was made; and (3) that the vehicle or vessel owner has five days after receiving the notice to contact the disclosing entity to determine whether the requester was an attorney or a private investigator. If the vehicle or vessel owner submits to the disclosing entity a copy of a valid court order restricting another person from contacting the vehicle or vessel owner or his or her family or household member, the disclosing entity must provide the vehicle or vessel owner with the name and address of the requester.

Requests for information may also be granted to governmental entities or law enforcement officers. The disclosure agreement with law enforcement entities must allow law enforcement to redisclose a vessel owner's name or address when trying to locate the owner of a vessel that has become a hazard.

The DOL must charge a \$2 fee for each information request, and the fee must be deposited into the Highway Safety Account.

Summary of Bill:

The DOL, county auditors, or agencies or firms authorized by the DOL may not release the name, any address, vehicle make, vehicle model, vehicle year, vehicle identification number, or license plate number associated with an individual who is a participant in the ACP. A participant's information may be released to government entities or law enforcement officers or if a court order is issued upon a probable cause finding by a judicial officer that the release of the participant's information is legally necessary in the course of a criminal investigation or prosecution or to prevent immediate risk to a minor.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 18, 2019.

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