



CHANGE IN MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION RENEWAL POLICY

By: Paul Frisman, Principal Analyst

ISSUE

You asked when the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) changed its motor vehicle registration renewal procedure from one that required two DMV mailings to one that required only one mailing, and the reasons it did so. You want to know if any recent legislation proposed a return to the two-mailing system.

SUMMARY

Before 2010, DMV sent two registration renewal mailings to each motor vehicle owner. First, it mailed the owner a registration renewal application. When DMV received payment of the renewal fee, it mailed the owner a second letter containing a registration renewal sticker.

DMV switched to a one-mailing registration policy in 2010, after the legislature gave it the option of issuing registration stickers, rather than requiring DMV to issue them ([PA 10-110](#)). DMV requested the change as a cost saving measure.

Two bills have been proposed in recent years calling for a return to a two-step registration process. Two other bills sought to change the current system in other ways. None of the bills passed.

REGISTRATION POLICY CHANGE

In 2010, DMV Commissioner Ward asked the legislature to change the law to allow, rather than require, DMV to issue the registration stickers. He told Transportation Committee members at a March 10, 2010 hearing that DMV would stop issuing the stickers if the legislature adopted DMV's recommendation. The commissioner said this would save DMV mailing and handling costs, which he estimated at about \$800,000. The commissioner acknowledged that police found the stickers helpful in enforcing registration laws, but said he believed the advent of license plate readers



made the stickers unnecessary. The legislature enacted DMV's recommendation in § 23 of [PA 10-110](#), which took effect June 5, 2010.

The hearing testimony is available at:

<http://search.cga.state.ct.us/dl2010/CHR/DOC/2010TRA00310-R001200-CHR.DOC>.

Under the system that took effect in 2010, DMV mails one letter to each vehicle owner. The letter includes the registration, a portion to be returned to DMV with payment, and notice that the vehicle owner should resolve outstanding issues that would prevent DMV from renewing the registration (unpaid emissions fees, delinquent taxes, insurance compliance, unpaid parking tickets, etc.) (<http://www.ct.gov/dmv/cwp/view.asp?Q=466462&A=810>).

Legislation Proposing a Return to the Two-Mailing System

Bills were proposed in 2014 and 2015 on returning to the two-mailing system.

2014. In 2014 the Transportation Committee heard testimony on [HB 5292](#), which would have restored the sticker system. The bill died in committee.

Several committee members, including Representatives Guerrera and Scribner and Senator Boucher, expressed concern at a February 28, 2014 hearing that many of their constituents were confused by the new system. The legislators said vehicle owners often didn't see or disregarded the DMV letter advising them to pay outstanding fees and taxes. It was only when they received a letter to that effect from DMV or were pulled over by police that they learned the car wasn't properly registered, the legislators said.

DMV Commissioner Currey, testifying against [HB 5292](#), said the legislature would need to restore the \$800,000 eliminated from DMV's budget for mailing and handling costs if it approved the measure, "as well as additional funding to be able to create this new registration process once again." She estimated it would cost \$2 million for the first year and about \$1 million in the second year to create the system and mail stickers for more than 3 million registered vehicles. The commissioner also said that reinstating the sticker system would hamper DMV's conversion to a new computer system and that vehicle owners could always check a vehicle's registration status on the DMV website. The hearing testimony can be found at: <http://search.cga.state.ct.us/dl2014/CHR/DOC/2014TRA00228-R001000-CHR.DOC> Information about [HB 5292](#), including the commissioner's written testimony, can be found at: http://cgalites/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&which_year=2014&bill_num=5292

2015. Three bills addressed the registration renewal process in 2015. [HB 6500](#) would have reinstated a two-step registration process. It would have (1) barred DMV from issuing a registration until it received proof that the registrant was in compliance with the law (i.e., up to date on taxes, parking tickets, and other fees) and (2) added \$1.50 to the registration fee to cover the costs of establishing the new system. Representative Becker, speaking in favor of the bill, said it was time-consuming for police to issue tickets for people driving vehicles with invalid registrations, and confusing and costly for state residents who mistakenly believed their registration was valid. Becker said he was not calling for a return to the sticker system. The bill was reported favorably by the Transportation Committee but died in the Finance Committee.

Two other bills, neither of which made it out of the Transportation Committee, would have affected registration and emissions testing procedures.

[HB 6363](#) would have directed DMV to reinstate the sticker system for emissions testing and registration and required the display of these stickers on license plates. [HB 5944](#) would have required DMV to mail each vehicle owner a registration renewal application and notice of emissions testing requirements in a single envelope. Its sponsor, Representative Ackert, said this would "save the state time and money and the vehicle owner an unwanted late fee."

PF:bs