
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5057

AN ACT STANDARDIZING DRIVE-ONLY LICENSES.

SUMMARY

This bill makes several changes to the information on driver's licenses issued to people who cannot prove lawful presence in the United States (known as "drive-only" licenses). Generally, the bill eliminates markings or characteristics that visually distinguish drive-only licenses from the federally noncompliant licenses that are issued to U.S. citizens and others who are lawfully present.

Specifically, the bill eliminates the requirements that drive-only licenses (1) indicate that the license is for driving purposes only and (2) state, on the back, that it may not be used for voting purposes. However, the bill retains the existing prohibition on using a drive-only license for voter identification. It also retains the requirement that drive-only licenses indicate that the license may not be used for federal identification purposes, which is required under the federal Real ID Act (see BACKGROUND).

The bill also makes the validity period for drive-only licenses the same as for standard noncommercial licenses and proportionately adjusts the fees. As under existing law for noncommercial licenses, under the bill, drive-only licenses are valid for up to eight years. (In practice, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) generally issues eight-year licenses, with some exceptions.) Under current law, drive-only licenses expire from three to six years after initial issuance and must be renewed every three years after that.

Lastly, the bill makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2025

BACKGROUND

Federal Real ID Act and Required Markings

The federal Real ID Act sets minimum security standards for state driver’s license issuance and production, and states must comply with the law in order for the licenses they issue to be accepted for federal identification purposes (e.g., boarding a domestic flight). Under Real ID, states may issue both compliant and noncompliant licenses, but all licenses must have a Department of Homeland Security-approved security marking indicating the license’s level of compliance with the Real ID Act (6 C.F.R. § 37.17(n)). Connecticut DMV automatically issues Real ID-compliant licenses to new applicants and out-of-state transfers, but it will renew regular (i.e., noncompliant) licenses for those who currently hold them. Real ID-compliant licenses are marked with a gold star, and noncompliant licenses are marked with the phrase “not for federal identification.” Real ID compliant licenses cannot be issued to people who cannot prove lawful presence.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 23 Nay 13 (03/18/2024)