

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 76 (Bates)
As Amended August 22, 2018
2/3 vote

SENATE VOTE: vote not relevant

Committee	Votes	Ayes	Noes
Public Employee	>	vote not relevant	
Judiciary		vote not relevant	
Appropriations	>	vote not relevant	

SUMMARY: Waives the driver’s license application fee or replacement fee for a REAL ID driver’s license for an individual who comes into the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) prior to October 1, 2020, who had previously renewed their license by mail or online and the license expired between September 1, 2018 and January 31, 2019; extends the deadline to 90 days for new California residents to register their vehicles and get a California driver’s license.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: According to the author, “SB 76 proposes a short-term ‘Plus 90’ solution where DMV extends license renewal and out-of-state registration deadlines by 90 days this year. This ‘Plus 90’ bill will give DMV time to address its problems and give Californians time to plan accordingly. The media stories and first-hand accounts from constituents about shockingly-long wait times and other logistical challenges at DMV offices demands that the Legislature act quickly.”

Background: Wait times at DMV have increased since January 2018. According to DMV, wait times increased to 1 hour and 23 minutes for those without an appointment, or 35 minutes more than in the 2016/-7 fiscal year. However the actual wait times for many are even longer, as DMV starts to monitor wait times after an individual has received a ticket to direct them to the right customer service representative. Media accounts have found that individuals have waited outside DMV for several hours before receiving a ticket.

Much of the increase in wait times has been attributable to compliance with the Federal REAL ID Act of 2005, which requires in-person verification for a state issued driver’s license or identification (ID) in order for a person to fly domestically or enter a federal building. While individuals traditionally only have to renew their state issued driver’s license in person once every 15 years, individuals who wish to fly domestically have between January 2018 and October 2020 to renew in person, regardless of when their driver’s licenses expires.

Previously, Californians only needed to provide their social security number, an acceptable identity document, and proof of residency in order to receive a state issued driver’s license or ID. Now you need your social security card, a passport or birth certificate, and proof of residency (and proof of name change if necessary). DMV employees have to explain to individuals why they need these documents, and explain that if they do not have them they will be unable to fly.

What used to take less than a minute to ask “why are you here?” is now taking, on average, five minutes because DMV employees need to ask if you have proper documents, explain REAL ID, and deal with frustrated customers who were unaware of these changes and now have to go home to get the proper documents. If it takes five times as long to deal with a single person, and there are fifty people in line, what used to take 50 minutes now takes four hours and twenty minutes.

The Department of Homeland Security finalized their regulations for the REAL ID Act in 2008. By 2016, 32 states were non-compliant with REAL ID. Today, 17 states, including California, have been granted an October 1, 2020 extension to comply with the act.

DMV has taken several steps in anticipation of increased traffic as a result of REAL ID. For example, DMV temporarily hired 550 individuals in the last year to handle increased traffic. However, they were unable to accurately predict the length of time needed to explain REAL ID, and the additional hires have shown to be insufficient. As a result, DMV has announced they are transferring 289 employees from DMV headquarters to field offices, and are requesting a budget augmentation to hire more employees. DMV is now open on Saturday at 60 field offices, and 14 offices are opening at 7 a.m. DMV has also installed or plans to install 160 self-help terminals called DMV NOW at field offices and grocery stores that can handle vehicle registrations. Vehicle registrations can also be renewed online or by mail. New vehicle registrations for vehicles purchased out of state may also be completed by business partners of DMV, including the American Automobile Association (AAA). This option was chosen more than 200,000 times in the 2016-17 fiscal year. Out of state vehicles currently get a 20 day extension for registration. This bill proposes extending it further to 110 days for vehicles registered in 2018.

Committee Comments: Much of the increased wait times at DMV offices are because of individuals coming into DMV to get a REAL ID when they could have otherwise renewed their license by mail or online. Many of these individuals are unable to make an appointment prior to the driver’s license expiration date. As a result, they either need to come into DMV without an appointment, or renew their license by mail and come into DMV later and pay for their driver’s license twice.

This bill provides temporary relief to DMV wait times by allowing the individuals described above to renew by mail or online and subsequently make an appointment with DMV to get a REAL ID without getting charged for their driver’s license twice.

In addition this bill provides more time for new residents to register their out of state vehicles and get a California driver’s license. Right now, a vehicle registered in a foreign state has 20 days to reregister in California, and a new resident has 10 days to get a California license. While the vehicle registration can be done by a DMV business partner, the licensing must be done in person. A 10-day requirement will likely result in an individual being forced to come into a DMV without an appointment. This bill allows new residents to California in 2018 to instead come into DMV within 90 days to exchange their driver’s licenses for a California driver’s license and register vehicles in California.