

Citizens Need to be Aware of Changes to Driver's License Law

This past session the legislature passed a bill tightening up our law on renewing driver's licenses to make sure that only those legally in the country were getting this important document. The "Show Me Proof" law came in response to a mandate issued by the federal government following the horrific terrorist attacks on 9/11.

Here are some important items to consider when you go to renew your license. Under the law, citizens now must show a one-time proof of lawful presence in the United States (birth certificate, U.S. passport, certificate of citizenship), proof of identity (Social Security Card and name-change proof if applicable) and proof of residency (a recent utility or cable bill, a property tax receipt, or most recent bank statement, etc.) when applying for a license or renewal.

Unfortunately, some Missourians have had to make a trip to the DMV only to find out they did not have the necessary documents. This has been especially difficult for some senior citizens who have difficulty finding birth certificates or for women whose names have changed due to marriage. Some license applicants have been turned down because, though they have been driving for years, they don't have a birth certificate on record. Others had to go home empty-handed because their birth certificate contained a typo.

The goal of the law is to prevent potential terrorists from blending in among our civilian population—not to inconvenience law-abiding citizens. The State is doing its best to make the process less burdensome and to come up with some needed "fine tuning." This has resulted in two recent revisions to the "Show Me Proof" program.

The first is flexibility with misspellings and typos. If it can be reasonably determined that the error on your birth certificate is a typographical mistake, you should have no problem with getting or renewing your driver's license. If your name has been legally changed, just bring in the legal name-change document with your original birth certificate to prove lawful presence.

The second improvement to the Show Me Proof program is an alternative, easier process to verify proof of lawful presence for U.S. citizens born in the year 1930 or before who do not have a birth certificate. This is because not many states issued birth certificates until the 1930s, and records that *do* exist sometimes contain minor errors. This will be of great help to senior citizens who have run into difficulty complying with the new law.

The new Show Me Proof law exists to help prevent identity fraud, and most importantly, to stop potential terrorists from plotting against our nation. However, as the new program is being implemented there will perhaps need to be further streamlining to make sure that citizens are not unduly inconvenienced. If you do have difficulty getting your license renewed, please feel free to contact my office and we will help you navigate the requirement of the new law.

A list of documents that are acceptable as proof of lawful presence is available on the Department of Revenue's Web site www.dor.mo.gov/mvdl/drivers/idrequirements.htm. If you have any questions about the new program you can call the Department of Revenue at (573) 751-2730. Or, if you would like to contact my office you can reach us by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us or by phone at (888) 711-9278 and we will be glad to assist you.