



Respecting Seniors and Improving Road Safety

JEFFERSON CITY — In accordance with a federal mandate issued following Sept. 11, 2001, Missouri created the Show-Me Proof program in July of last year to ensure that everyone with a state-issued identification card has a legal reason to be in the United States. One of the requirements of the Show-Me Proof program is to substantiate lawful presence. To do that, Missouri citizens have to show their birth certificates in order to obtain a state-issued ID.

The Show-Me Proof law's aim is to stop potential terrorists from obtaining state-issued IDs to further their anti-American causes. However, the requirement has unintentionally made the license-renewal process a nightmare for law-abiding senior citizens.

The problem is many senior citizens do not have birth certificates because they were born at home, in other states, or before birth certificates were issued. If they do have one, many are laced with inaccuracies, which bog down the license-renewal process even more.

To correct this, the Legislature in 2006 passed Senate Bill 1001. The measure exempts Missouri citizens who are currently 65 or older from having to show a birth certificate when renewing their driver's licenses. Under the legislation, seniors would be able to use a previously issued Missouri driver's license, instruction permit or non-driver's license as proof of lawful presence. The legislation also provides that those younger than 65 who have had a driver's license for at least 15 years but do not have the necessary documents to prove lawful presence can apply for a one-year extension.

With this measure, we will prevent honest Missouri citizens — many of whom have fought for their country in time of war, worked diligently in this state for years, and led notable lives — from being treated like possible terrorists.

SB 1001 will also improve safety on Missouri roads by increasing the amount of behind-the-wheel instruction that teen drivers must receive before they can obtain an instruction permit. Teen drivers must have 40 hours, rather than 20, of driving instruction, including at least 10 hours of nighttime driving.

To decrease the chances of teen drivers with intermediate driver's licenses being distracted while driving, the measure also establishes passenger limitations. For the first six months after acquiring an intermediate driver's licenses, drivers cannot have in their vehicle more than one passenger who is under the age of 19 and not a member of their immediate family. After that, the intermediate driver is limited to three such passengers.

This legislation will make it easier on seniors to get a driver's license and make Missouri roads safer. The Legislature passed this measure with an emergency clause. So as soon as the Governor signs it, it will become law.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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