

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice

BILL: CS/SB 1584

INTRODUCER: Transportation Committee and Senator Smith and others

SUBJECT: Suspended Driver Licenses

DATE: February 11, 2016

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Jones	Eichin	TR	Fav/CS
2.	Harkness	Sadberry	ACJ	Recommend: Favorable
3.			AP	

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Technical Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1584 establishes a Driver License Reinstatement Days pilot program in certain counties throughout the state. The program requires the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), state attorney, public defender's office, circuit and county courts, clerk of the court, and interested organizations within each county, participate in the pilot program. The purpose of the program is to reinstate suspended driver licenses. The clerk of the circuit court (clerk of court) is authorized to waive certain fees to facilitate driver license reinstatements for eligible persons. By October 1, 2017, the DHSMV is required to report the results of the program and a recommendation to continue, discontinue, or expand the program to the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House of Representatives.

This section is repealed October 1, 2017.

The bill does not have a discernible state fiscal impact. See Section V.

The act takes effect July 1, 2016.

II. Present Situation:

Driver License Suspensions and Revocations

Individuals who violate Florida laws may be sanctioned through the suspension or revocation of their driving privilege. Driver license revocations and suspensions, respectively, terminate or temporarily withdraw one's driving privilege.¹ To reinstate a suspended or revoked license, individuals must fulfill legal and financial obligations. Drivers will need to pay reinstatement fees in addition to any outstanding obligations to legally drive.

Entities at both state and local level play a role in driver license suspensions. At the state level, the DHSMV is responsible for issuing driver licenses and administering driver license examinations, as well as suspending and revoking driver licenses, which includes providing notice required by law and communicating license reinstatement requirements. The role of other state agencies is to notify the DHSMV when individuals violate laws that can be sanctioned by driver license suspension. For example, if a parent is delinquent on child support payments, the Department of Revenue (DOR) notifies the DHSMV to start the process of driver license suspension.

At the local level, clerks of court are responsible for collecting financial obligations imposed by a court for criminal and traffic offenses, as well as maintaining court records and ensuring that court orders are carried out. Clerks of court use driver license sanctions as a means to improve collections of fines and fees. Section 322.245, F.S., requires clerks of court to notify the DHSMV when a driver fails to pay court-imposed financial obligations for criminal offenses. Failure to pay can result in a license suspension. In addition, clerks of court provide information to the DHSMV about any court actions that require the suspension or revocation of driver licenses. On behalf of DHSMV, clerks of court and county tax collectors may reinstate driving privileges and collect reinstatement fees.

Effectiveness

As three-fourths of drivers with suspended or revoked licenses are estimated to continue to drive, indicating driver license sanctions may not effectively force compliance.² Driver license suspension and revocation penalties are commonly used to punish individuals who do not pay certain financial penalties and obligations, sometimes whether or not the individual can afford to do so. Penalties for driving with a suspended or revoked license increase per offense, causing individuals suffering from financial hardship to become stuck in a self-perpetuating cycle. Drivers who were unable to pay their original fine or court fees may lose their ability to legally get to and from work. If they are caught driving while the license is suspended or revoked, they will incur additional court costs and penalties.

Driver License Reinstatement Fees

Section 322.21(8), F.S., requires a person who applies for reinstatement following a driver license suspension or revocation to pay a service fee of \$45 following a suspension and \$75

¹ Sections 322.01(36) and (40), F.S.

² *Id.*

following a revocation, in addition to the \$25 fee to replace their license if necessary. “Failure to comply” suspensions require a \$60 reinstatement fee.

Driver License Reinstatement Days³

In July 2015, Sarasota County held a Driver License Reinstatement Day. The purpose of the event was to negotiate fees with people whose licenses were suspended because of a failure to pay fines. An estimated 2,000 people attended, of which approximately 500 were served. Of those 500 people, 100 were able to reinstate their license. Some were not eligible for reinstatement because they were habitual traffic offenders, under suspension for a DUI, or other were facing charges. All 500 people experienced some level of reduction in the local county fees they owed.

In April 2015, the Duval County Clerk of the Circuit Court, in conjunction with 59 other clerk of courts’ offices, participated in a statewide campaign called “Operation Green Light.” The goal of the operation was to allow individuals who were delinquent in traffic or court fines and fees to make those payments and assist them in getting their licenses reinstated. The 40 percent collections surcharge was waived for these individuals.⁴

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill establishes a Driver License Reinstatement Days program in Broward, Duval, Hillsborough, Miami-Dade, Orange, and Pinellas County.

The purpose of the program is to reinstate suspended driver licenses. A person is eligible for reinstatement under this program if the period of his or her suspension has elapsed, the person completed any required course or program, the person is otherwise eligible for reinstatement, and the license was suspended for:

- Driving without a valid license;
- Driving with a suspended license;
- Failing to make payments on penalties in collection;
- Failing to appear in court for a traffic violation; or
- Failing to comply with provisions of ch. 318, F.S., relating to disposition of a traffic citation, or ch. 322, F.S., relating to driver licenses.

A person is not eligible for reinstatement under this program if the person’s driver license is suspended or revoked for:

- Failing to fulfill any court-ordered or administratively established child support obligations;
- A violation under s. 316.193, F.S., involving driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- Failing to complete a required driver training program, driver improvement course, or alcohol or substance abuse education or evaluation program;
- Commission of a traffic-related felony;

³ Email from the DHSMV, *Draft – SB 1584 Legislative Bill Analysis* (Jan. 22, 2016) (on file with the Senate Committee on Transportation).

⁴ See American Safety Council, *Florida’s Operation Green Light Program* (April 17, 2015), <http://blog.americansafetycouncil.com/florida-operation-green-light/> (last visited Jan. 24, 2016).

- Becoming a habitual traffic offender; or
- An offense committed outside a county in which the pilot program is being implemented.

The DHSMV has indicated within these six counties approximately 541,681 licenses are suspended for failure to appear or comply with a traffic summons, failure to pay a traffic fine, or failure to pay or appear on a criminal charge. These counts are broken down by county and suspension categories below⁵:

Suspended Driver Category:	Broward	Duval	Hillsboro.	Dade	Orange	Pinellas	Total
Fail to Appear-Traffic Summons	23,567	17,214	12,454	56,296	9,410	6,177	125,118
Fail to Comply-Traffic Summons	2,073	1,964	1,488	2,198	1,800	872	10,395
Failed to pay Traffic Fine-Penalty	63,221	47,965	44,622	118,794	51,034	28,158	353,794
Criminal-Fail to Pay	17,574	3,352	11,060	4,291	2,646	2,515	41,438
Criminal- Failed to Appear	2,703	998	2,729	2,509	1,003	994	10,936
	109,138	71,493	72,353	184,088	65,893	38,716	541,681

Participants within each county implementing the pilot program shall include the DHSMV, state attorney, public defender’s office, circuit and county courts, clerk of court, and interested organizations within each county participate in the pilot program.

The clerk of court, in consultation with the other participants, will select one or more days for the event. The bill requires a person seeking reinstatement through the program to pay the full reinstatement fee; however, the clerk may compromise or waive other fees and costs to facilitate the reinstatement.

The clerk of court and the DHSMV are responsible for verifying any information necessary for reinstatement of a driver license under the program.

The DHSMV, by October 1, 2017, is required to report the results of the program and a recommendation to continue, discontinue, or expand the program to the Governor, Senate President, and Speaker of the House of Representatives.

This section is repealed October 1, 2017.

The act takes effect July 1, 2016.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

⁵ *Supra* note 3.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

CS/SB 1584 will have a positive impact on individuals who may have their financial obligations waived or reduced, and assistance in reinstating their driver license.

The bill may also have a negative impact on collection agents working with the clerk of courts, if collection fees and costs are waived.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill may have a negative impact to local clerks of court if clerks waive fees and costs, as permitted in the bill.

The costs associated with implementing the program are unknown; therefore, the bill could have a negative fiscal impact on the required participants.

The bill will likely have a positive impact on state revenue from the increase in reinstatement fees collected.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

The bill creates an undesignated section of law that will be repealed October 1, 2017.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Transportation on January 27, 2016:

The CS amended the language of SB 1584 to maintain consistency with statutory provisions.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
