



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, M.D., Governor

Department of Transportation

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DATE: February 25, 2013

TO: House Committee on Judiciary

FROM: Amy Joyce, Legislative Liaison

SUBJECT: House Bill 2517, eight-year privileges for citizens of COFA nations

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 2517 authorizes the Department of Transportation, Driver and Motor Vehicle Services Division (DMV) to issue a standard eight-year driver license or identification card to Oregon residents who are from those countries with a Compact of Free Association (COFA) with the United States.

DISCUSSION

Foreign nationals lawfully admitted to the United States are allowed to obtain Oregon driving privileges or identification cards if they meet residency and other eligibility requirements. Those who have been granted permanent legal residence are allowed eight years before expiration, just as are U.S. citizens. For temporary legal residents, Oregon law requires that the date of expiration of the driver license or ID card must not exceed the date of authorized stay as shown on the customer's immigration documents. When immigration documents do not provide a specific end date, the law requires the license or ID card to expire after just one year.

The Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau each have entered into an agreement with the United States called a Compact of Free Association. These compacts grant citizens of those countries authorization to remain in the United States for an unlimited period of time—permanently if they so choose. Correspondingly, their immigration documents do not contain a specific ending date. However, under federal immigration law their status technically is not “permanent resident.” Because they are not permanent residents, but have no specified end dates on their documents, they fall into the portion of Oregon law that requires their driver license or ID card to be valid for only one year. And while they can renew every year they remain in the U.S., that means many additional trips to DMV and the accompanying cost for renewal.

CONCLUSION

This bill allows DMV to issue an eight-year license or ID card to qualified applicants who provide proof of citizenship of a country with a Compact of Free Association with the United States. The bill improves customer service by reducing repeated trips to DMV offices and the fees required with each renewal.