

## **Testimony of Lt. Bruce Scott**

### **NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST**

#### **An Act Regarding Motor Vehicle Registration Violations**

Senator Diamond, Rep. Martin and distinguished Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. My name is Lt. Bruce Scott, and I am the Commanding Officer of the State Police Traffic Safety Unit. I am here today to testify on behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police Neither For Nor Against LD 644.

This bill, if passed would decriminalize operating an expired (beyond 150 days) or unregistered vehicle from a class E crime to traffic infraction. It would require a warning to be given to an operator in violation of this law and then allow the owner 10 days to get the vehicle registered. Current law requires an operator to be given a warning within the first 30 days of expiration and the operator has 2 business days to comply, but this bill removes that section of law so it would mean that the expiration could have been months or even years ago, yet still require a warning. A person driving a vehicle with no plates at all would still have to be warned before any type of enforcement were to take place. This would be problematic due to the lack of a central repository. Law enforcement would have no way of knowing if another agency has already warned an individual for the expired registration. Furthermore, LD 845 seeks to make any registration violation a secondary offense, meaning when you combine these two bills the law would be nearly unenforceable.

Also, current law only allows a police officer to tow a vehicle under certain conditions. If this bill were to pass and it were no longer a crime to operate an unregistered vehicle, then law enforcement would not be able to remove the vehicle from the roadway when necessary and appropriate.

The fine is currently very low for a first offense at \$50.00 for Operating With an Expired Registration, which was appropriate for the current traffic violation, but may not serve as an adequate deterrent for what is now a crime that this law seeks to decriminalize. In other words, we believe there would be a lack of compliance if this bill were to pass because the risk is very low and the reward very high. It can cost hundreds if not thousands of dollar to register a vehicle and if it were only a traffic violation to not register a vehicle and you must be warned before any enforcement action can be levied, there is no risk in taking your chances and not registering your vehicle at all.

In closing, I want to point out that in my experience, unregistered vehicles, uninsured vehicles and uninspected vehicles seem to go hand in hand.

For these reasons, we are Neither For Nor Against LD 644

On behalf of the Department of Public Safety and the Maine State Police, I thank you for your time and would be happy to try and answer any questions that you might have.