



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: LD 159 An Act to Require Vehicle Registrations to Include the Next of Kin
of the Vehicle Owner

Senator Nangle, Representative Crafts and distinguished members of the Committee Transportation,

1. Thank you for allowing me to introduce my bill, LD 159 An Act to Require Vehicle Registrations to Include the Next of Kin of the Vehicle Owner. This is a simple bill – as written it requires that a vehicle that is registered to an individual include information about the registered owner's next of kin.
2. I was asked to sponsor this bill by another member of the law enforcement profession, but having been introduced to the bill I honestly wish I had thought of it sooner.
3. I served as a law enforcement officer in the State of Maine for 17 years in three municipal departments and I want to share with you three different types of scenarios that I personally encountered during that time where this would have been extremely helpful in furthering public safety.
4. There were instances when I responded to motor vehicle crashes that involved fatalities where a notification of the victims family was delayed because the driver was from out of town, unknown to us and was the only name on the registration. This required huge amounts of investigative work to identify someone in the decedent's family to notify, sometimes taking many hours. The need for a prompt death notification is often exasperated by the fact that information gleaned from 'scannerland' is often posted on social media and family members sometimes find out about motor vehicle deaths improperly before a law enforcement agency can make a proper notification. Additionally, even without a death, in the case of a serious accident where the driver might be disabled or incapacitated,

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being able to make a prompt contact with family is vital. And while I have not experienced this scenario personally, in a scenario where a driver with an unknown contact is a candidate for organ donation prompt contact is also extremely important, as every minute counts.

5. In my second scenario, which I and many other LEOs have encountered, it has happened that we have encountered elderly drivers in an altered mental state, specifically someone who is suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's. Often, these people are far from home haven gotten disoriented and haven driven some distance, and often they are the only registered owner listed. If a Silver Alert has not yet been issued, it is often very difficult to immediately locate a relative.

6. In my final scenario, again which I have encountered, is when a law enforcement officer encounters what is known in our parlance as a 10-48, or 'Unattended Death'. While this is the least common scenario, at least in my experience, it does happen. And even though the protocol is to notify the Medical Examiner when encountering an unattended death, if the person in the vehicle is unknown to us, not a local, and the only registered owner listed, it can be problematic locating someone for additional notifications.

7. After submitting this bill I was notified by a representative of the Probate Courts and informed that the term 'Next of Kin' had a specific legal meaning and was asked if I would be agreeable to amending the bill by changing the term Next of Kin to Emergency Contact. As I believe this would still accomplish the intent of the bill, I would be very agreeable to this.

8. I also understand that there would obviously be some cost to the State if this change is made. Not only would the software that processes vehicle registrations have to be changed by adding fields for the added data, but the physical forms that the registrations are printed on would also have to be changed. I believe that the public safety benefit outweighs the cost of the change to the software. However I believe that the costs for form changes can be minimized by either using existing forms and printing the new field information in some of the blank space on the right hand side of the paper registrations until the current stock of forms is depleted or by setting an implementation date based on the current stock of existing paper registration forms and their estimated date of depletion.

9. I respectfully encourage the committee to consider this legislation with a vote of 'Ought To Pass'.

Respectfully,



Rep. Chad R. Perkins
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