

SUBJECT: Requiring driver's license for vehicle registration

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Phillips, Darby, Bonnen, Fletcher, Harper-Brown, Lavender, Pickett

0 nays

2 present not voting — Y. Davis, McClendon

2 absent — Martinez, Rodriguez

WITNESSES: None

BACKGROUND: To register a vehicle, Transportation Code requires an individual to present proof of insurance and pay registration and service fees.

DIGEST: CSHB 598 would require a person to present proof of a valid Texas driver's or commercial driver's license to register a motor vehicle. The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles would have to prescribe the acceptable forms of proof.

Exceptions would be made for vehicles owned by a person aged 85 years or older, a person with a disability, a person with a valid out-of-state license, or a car dealer.

Changes in the law would apply only to registration applications submitted on or after the September 1, 2011, effective date of the bill.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 598 would help law enforcement to ensure better road safety. Since they are not required to show a driver's license when registering a vehicle, many unlicensed drivers are on the road. Aside from traffic violation stops and car accidents, law enforcement has no mechanism to determine if someone is driving illegally.

More than 20 other states require a person to show proof of a driver's license to register a vehicle.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

While law enforcement should have the tools needed to ensure road safety, CSHB 598 carries too many unintended consequences. There are many vehicle owners without a valid driver's license, not covered by the bill's exceptions, who need to register their cars. The bill would disrupt the car registration process for elderly owners under the age of 85 and Texans who own vehicles driven by chauffeurs or friends or relatives who drive for them, parents without a driver's license who own vehicles that their children drive, and many others.

NOTES:

The committee substitute added an exception to the bill's requirements for vehicles owned by persons with a disability and by out-of-state license holders.