

Regional News – May 3, 2013

Tidbits

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2013 Standing Committee Vacancies

Each of AAMVA's three standing committees have vacancies beginning September 2013. If you are interested in applying for membership, please download the Committee Member Application.

- The Driver Standing Committee is seeking an information technology representative and a public affairs and consumer education (PACE) representative from any of AAMVA's four regions.
- The Enforcement Standing Committee is seeking two law enforcement representatives - one from Region I and one from Region III. These applicants must be sworn law enforcement officers.
- The Vehicle Standing Committee is seeking an information technology representative and a public affairs and consumer education (PACE) representative from any of AAMVA's four regions. The Vehicle Standing Committee is also seeking a vehicle representative from Region III.

All terms are for two years beginning September 2013 and ending August 2015. Download the [Committee Member Application](#). Applications must be received by **August 1, 2013**. If you have questions, please contact Dianne Graham, director, Member & Conference Services via email dgraham@aamva.org or phone (703) 908-8267. For more information, see <http://www.aamva.org/Committees-and-Working-Groups/>.

Region I News

Connecticut Legislators Back Driver's Licenses For Illegal Immigrants

A proposal in Connecticut to expand access to driver's licenses to immigrants regardless of their legal status has received the support of the governor, legislative leaders and mayors from across the state. Eight mayors were joined by House Speaker Brendan Sharkey, Senate Majority Leader Martin Looney and other legislators at a Monday news conference at the state Capitol to endorse the initiative. "When we place artificial restrictions on the access of any member of our community to the full fruits of what we have to offer here in Connecticut, we are holding ourselves back," said Sharkey. [Read the full article on CBS New York.](#)

Mayor Gray Wants Driver's Licenses for Undocumented Immigrants (District of Columbia)

People living in the country illegally would be able to get driver's licenses in the District under a bill that Mayor Vincent Gray plans to introduce. Gray, Council Chairman Phil Mendelson and other city leaders will introduce the bill Thursday. It would allow D.C. residents to obtain a second-tier license or a city identification card regardless of their citizenship or immigration status. As with all legislation in the District, it would only become law after a 30-day congressional review period. Five states --

including Maryland -- already allow people who don't have legal permission to live in the United States to obtain driver's licenses. The others are Illinois, New Mexico, Washington state and, most recently, Oregon, whose governor signed a bill Wednesday in conjunction with rallies around the country in support of immigration reform. Colorado and North Carolina are among the states considering similar legislation. [Read the full article at NBC Washington.](#)

New Hampshire Authorities Disrupt Illegal Car Export Scheme

Two California men at the heart of a complex multi-state luxury vehicle export scheme uncovered by investigators in New Hampshire last year have plead guilty to federal charges, U.S. Attorney John Kacavas said Monday. Flanked by representatives from the multi-agency investigation, Kacavas said between 2009 and 2012, Frank Ku, 31, of San Gabriel, Calif., and Danny Hsu, 33, of West Covina, Calif., orchestrated the purchase of 93 luxury vehicles worth more than \$5.5 million dollars from 16 states, including New Hampshire. The cars were then shipped to China and sold for profit. U.S. law prohibits the export of new cars. The Mercedes, BMWs, Lexus and Audi, and other luxury vehicles the two men illegally exported could sell in China for as much as twice their U.S. resale value, Kacavas said. Fourteen of the vehicles, worth \$750,000, were apprehended at the Port of Long Beach, Calif. Those vehicles are going through the forfeiture process, and Kacavas said he's hopeful their value will be recouped. "The 79 remaining cars that were exported to China are gone and there's nothing we can do about that," Kacavas said. [Read the full article in the Fresno Bee.](#)

School Bus Breath Test Locks for Drivers Could Cost \$100M (New York)

State legislators are proposing that school buses be equipped with ignition interlocks. Similar to a Breathalyzer, an interlock installed in a vehicle requires the operator to breathe into it to prove that he or she is not intoxicated before the ignition will work. The bill was prompted by several accidents involving allegedly impaired bus drivers. There have been at least four since October on Long Island alone - including one in which a bus ran into a house. [Read the full article in the Albany Times Union.](#)

Shumlin Signs Gas Tax Increase that Takes Effect Wednesday (Vermont)

Gov. Peter Shumlin on Monday afternoon signed the transportation budget bill that contains a new gas tax, meaning the tax will go into effect Wednesday. The tax is a net increase of 5.9 cents per gallon. That includes a new 2 percent assessment on the price of gas, while the per-gallon tax decreases by 0.8 cents. Officials changed the tax from a per-gallon to a percentage amount because declining use of gas has led to a decrease in revenues used to maintain roads and bridges. The House and Senate gave final approval to the budget last week and the governor signed the bill unusually quickly because it depends on the tax starting May 1. [Read the full article in the Burlington Free Press.](#)

Region II News

Alabama Offering New Veterans Driver's License

Alabama veterans will have the option to display proof of their military service on their driver's license. A law sponsored by Democratic Rep. Marcel Black of Tuscumbia provided for the Veterans Driver's License. The state Department of Public Safety says the licenses will be available beginning May 1. Black says veterans can show their status to obtain benefits, rebates and accommodations. To get a license, a veteran must visit a Department of Public Safety license examining office and present a DD-214 form from the Department of Defense that shows a status of honorable or general under honorable conditions. [Read the full article in the Commercial Appeal.](#)

Texting While Driving Ban Legislation Goes to Gov. Rick Scott (Florida)

Texting while driving will be illegal in Florida if Gov. Rick Scott signs legislation sent to him by the Senate on Thursday after a years-long effort to join most other states in outlawing it. The Senate voted 39-1 in favor of a bill (SB 52) that makes it illegal to read or type texts or emails while actually driving, though it would remain legal to do it while stopped, such as at a red light. Scott hasn't said whether he'll sign the bill. Under the measure as passed, only drivers who are pulled over for something else, such as careless driving or speeding, and then are determined to have been texting while driving, could be cited. And in most cases, police and prosecutors won't be able to seek the driver's cell phone records to prove it. Under an amendment added to the bill this week by the House, records could only be sought if there were an injury or death in a crash. [Read the full article on floridatoday.com.](#)

Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles Intercepts Threatening Letter (Florida)

The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) has re-opened for business after a threatening letter led officials to close the building this morning. Following standard protocol, the building was temporarily evacuated until deemed safe by the Regional Domestic Security Task Force. After conducting field tests on the letter and the office in which it was received, members of the task force believe no credible threat was posed. However, exercising an abundance of caution, the letter will undergo confirmatory laboratory testing by the Florida Department of Health. Julie L. Jones, Executive Director of the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles said, "We appreciate the quick response of the first responders to the Kirkman Building, especially the Tallahassee Fire Department, Tallahassee Police Department, FBI, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and Leon County Emergency Medical Services. I am proud of our employees who displayed their professionalism throughout the process." [Read more at fhsmv.gov.](#)

You Could Be Driving Illegally and Not Know It (South Carolina)

Many South Carolina drivers are violating the law and should have their licenses suspended but don't know it. And the executive director of the state Department of Motor Vehicles says he will not take action against them because it would create a public outcry. At issue are eye tests, which the law requires drivers to take each five years at DMV or at a private doctor. The problem is that the law now allows drivers to wait 10 years before renewing their license. So many drivers wait until their license is up before paying attention to how well they can see, or notifying the state about their vision. [Read the full article on greenvilleonline.com.](#)

Bill Would Allow Rural Residents to Renew Driver's Licenses at Courthouses (Texas)

Residents of sparsely populated rural counties could soon renew their driver's licenses or official ID cards at their local courthouse, instead of doing it at a far-away Texas Department of Public Safety office. This became a possibility on Wednesday when the Texas House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a bill by Ken King that would allow Texans living in counties with fewer than 50,000 residents renew such documentation locally. "It's a good bill," King, R-Canadian, said of his House Bill 827. "It allows a county commissioners' court to decide if they want to partner with DPS to be able to renew driver's licenses, or, issue a state ID out of a courthouse." [Read the full article in the Amarillo Globe-News.](#)

Region III News

Governor Signs Bill Limiting Indiana Specialty Plates

A plan overhauling Indiana's specialty auto license plate system and requiring all groups with plates to sell 500 a year has been signed into law by Gov. Mike Pence. The bill approved by lawmakers creates an eight-member bipartisan commission to review requests from nonprofit groups seeking specialty plates. The panel will check financial reports at least once a decade on how the groups are spending their plate

proceeds. The bill sets a limit of 150 specialty plates. A legislative report shows that 17 of the 92 specialty plates sold during the past two years fell short of selling the minimum 500 plates a year. [Read the full article in the Republic.](#)

Michigan Road Funding: House Panel Debates 20% Registration Fee Increase, More for Electric/Hybrids

Michigan motorists could be asked to pay more at the pump -- and at their local Secretary of State branch -- under a road funding plan that continues to take shape in Lansing. Republican state Rep. Wayne Schmidt of Traverse City, who previously introduced legislation to increase fuel taxes and charge them at the wholesale level so they could rise and fall with demand, last week introduced a bill that would boost annual registration fees on most vehicles by 20 percent. [Read the full article at mlive.com.](#)

Snyder Proposes Michigan Auto Insurance Overhaul

Gov. Rick Snyder and Republican leaders want to dump Michigan's unlimited coverage for severe vehicle crash injuries and replace it with a plan limiting auto insurance-funded coverage to \$1 million. The governor, as well as the House and Senate insurance committee chairmen, laid out a plan Thursday in which payment for care beyond \$1 million would shift to accident victims' health insurers, Medicaid or Medicare. The proposal is a bid to change the 40-year-old no-fault system to make auto insurance more affordable for consumers. The average Michigan family would save \$250 a year on auto coverage, the governor promised. [Read the full article in the Detroit News.](#)

House Committee Weighs Privacy Concerns, Fraud Risks in Two Bills (Missouri)

In the same meeting Monday, lawmakers voted to destroy copies of driver's license source documents and also considered a bill directing the state to study ways of finding fraud among food assistance users. The House Government Oversight and Accountability Committee heard two bills sponsored by Sen. Will Kraus, R-Lee's Summit. Senate Bill 252 prohibits the Department of Revenue from keeping copies of any documents used when individuals apply for driver's licenses, such as a utility bill to prove residency or a birth certificate to prove citizenship. [Read the full article in the News-Leader.](#)

Driver's License Notation to Show Veterans' Status Advances (Nebraska)

Nebraska lawmakers advanced a bill Monday to make it possible for veterans to identify their status simply by showing their driver's licenses or state identification cards. But a companion proposal to create special Military Honor license plates for veterans and active-duty military service members fell by the wayside. State Sen. Annette Dubas of Fullerton, who is chairwoman of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee, said she decided against pursuing the license plates because of opposition from Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha. She vowed to resurrect the proposal next year but said the battle over the idea would have taken too much time this year. [Read the full article in the World-Herald.](#)

Ohio Lawmaker Looks to Eliminate Front Plates

If State Rep. Stephen Slesnick's effort succeeds, the front end of your vehicle will look very different. Like the vehicles registered in the five states that border Ohio, it would no longer have a front license plate. Last month, Slesnick, D-Canton, and State Rep. Terry Johnson, R-McDermott, introduced House Bill 133. It would end the requirement that Ohio motorists have a front license plate for standard vehicles. Only the rear plate would remain. If it becomes law, Ohio would leave the group of 31 states that generally require two license plates on a vehicle and join the group of 19 states that require one, which includes Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. [Read the full article on cantonrep.com.](#)

Lawmakers Push to Strengthen Drunken Driving Laws (Wisconsin)

It's not uncommon to tune into the news and learn of another drunken driving arrest or accident. Oftentimes, the perpetrators have numerous offenses. Back in 2009, Wisconsin lawmakers passed legislation that was supposed to require jail time for drunken drivers who injure others. Republican Rep. Jim Ott says unfortunately, the wording of the law did not match supporters' intentions. So he's introduced a new version. "What this portion of the bill does is simply change the word may to the word shall so that it's very definitive that we do intend a 30 day sentence mandatory for injury caused by OWI," Ott says. Ott's plan would similarly strengthen the language when it comes to repeat offenders. "So that the three year confinement and the three year extended supervision for seventh, eighth and ninth OWI is mandatory. The same language is applied to 10 and above OWI's, so that those sentences are clearly mandatory," Ott says. [Read the full article on wuvm.com.](#)

Wisconsin Drunken-Driving Legislation's Cost Tops \$250M

Measures that would boost penalties for drunken driving would cost \$250 million a year and send thousands more people to jail or prison, according to estimates provided by state agencies that would be charged with implementing the proposals. The state also would need to spend \$236 million to build 17 300-bed facilities to house the expected increase in people serving time for drunken driving, the Department of Corrections estimates. Those estimates don't include the extra costs to counties whose jails would house offenders serving sentences of a year or less. An identical set of six bills has been introduced in the state Assembly and Senate to crack down on the persistent scourge of drunken driving on Wisconsin's roadways. Similar legislation failed to pass in the last two-year session. [Read the full article in the Pioneer Press.](#)

Region IV News

Ashton Kutcher Company Settles Lawsuit with DMV (Exclusive) (California)

Want service from the DMV? Maybe the best policy is to sue. Last June, Ashton Kutcher's production company, Katalyst Media, sued California's Department of Motor Vehicles for backing out of a deal on a reality television show that would have featured its employees. Katalyst claimed it was owed at least \$1.44 million in damages for breach of contract. The DMV has signed off on paperwork to settle the dispute. We're told that the agency will be writing a check to make the case go away. [Read the full article in the Hollywood Reporter.](#)

Bill Setting 'Zero Tolerance' for Driving on Drugs Stalls in Senate (California)

A proposal to create a "zero tolerance" policy for driving under the influence of drugs stalled in the California Senate on Tuesday. Senate Bill 289, by Democratic Sen. Lou Correa of Santa Ana would make it illegal to drive if the driver's blood contains any trace of drugs, including cocaine, heroin, marijuana and painkillers. Medications that have been lawfully prescribed, excluding medicinal marijuana, would be exempted. Supporters say the law is needed to protect motorists in light of what they say is an increase in driving under the influence of drugs. Critics, including several senators, raised questions at a Tuesday hearing about whether the bill goes too far by setting the tolerance level at zero.

[Read the full article in the Sacramento Bee.](#)

Bill Advances to Create Border Driver's License (California)

A proposal to create an enhanced driver's license to expedite border crossings is moving ahead in the Legislature. The measure carried by Sen. Ben Hueso, D-San Diego, would establish a process for the state Department of Motor Vehicles to work with federal authorities to establish such a license.

Applicants would have to be eligible for a U.S. passport, clear tighter background checks and pay more. The license would be equipped with technology that can be read remotely, avoiding lengthy stops at checkpoints. Widespread use of the new license would reduce overall border wait times and encourage more trade and travel between the two countries, supporters say. [Read more at utsandiego.com](#)

Former City Employee Pleads Guilty to License Plate Scam (California)

A former supervisor of Canyon Lake's special enforcement team reached an agreement with prosecutors Monday to plead guilty to forging DMV registration paperwork to obtain fee-exempt government license plates. The 62-year-old Colleary was sentenced to three years of probation and 105 days in a work release program and ordered to pay \$3,754 in victim restitution to the DMV, court records show. As part of the plea agreement, a perjury charge and a second forgery count were dismissed. [Read the full article on utsandiego.com.](#)

Stoned Drivers: How High is Too High to Get Behind the Wheel? (California)

Ever since California voters legalized medical marijuana in 1996, DUI defense attorneys have seen an increase in the number of arrests for driving stoned. But exactly how high is too high to drive? Our sister station -- KIRO in Seattle, Washington -- put stoned drivers to the test on a closed driving track under police supervision. In Washington State, voters legalized recreational pot use last year. The station tested three drivers: Addy, a heavy medical marijuana user; Dylan, who smokes pot only on weekends; and Jeff, who uses marijuana occasionally. When the test drivers were just a little bit stoned, all three drove more cautiously but generally did okay on the test track. The driving instructor thought they passed the test, even though Addy clipped a stop sign. After smoking a little bit more pot, the drivers were starting to feel it. At four times the legal limit, Jeff was still doing okay. At five times the legal limit, Dylan almost hit a camera man. And, at seven times the legal limit, Addy hit a cone. [Read the full article on CBS8.com](#)

Colorado Lawmakers Introduce Third Measure This Year on Stoned Driving

Colorado lawmakers on Thursday introduced yet another proposal - the sixth in three years - to set a definition of driving while stoned. The new proposal comes amid fears that a stoned-driving limit currently contained in a separate, major bill on recreational marijuana regulations could scuttle that entire bill and undo months of tedious work creating a framework for the forthcoming legal-pot retail industry. "The feeling and thought process in the Senate is that bill, the whole bill, will not pass if this provision is a part of it," House Minority Leader Mark Waller, R-Colorado Springs, said in a committee hearing Thursday in introducing the new bill on stoned driving. [Read the full article in the Denver Post.](#)

Dealers Try to Strengthen Franchise Laws (Colorado)

Dealers and automakers are slugging it out in some state legislatures over state franchise laws. Several state dealer associations are trying to beef up existing laws. Dealers and association leaders say enforcement of franchise protections has long been a problem, and it's a growing source of frustration. Some say automakers incorrectly interpret the laws to their advantage, and they feel betrayed after aiding struggling manufacturers during the recession. Dealer advocates say the problems -- which include disputes over warranty audits and whether new stores encroach on existing dealership territory -- routinely cost dealerships thousands of dollars and competitive advantages. The battle is quickly coming to a head in Colorado after the introduction of a bill this month. The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers vigorously opposes the legislation. [Read the full article in Automotive News.](#)

Cops, Courts Rethink DUI Warrants (Idaho)

Nez Perce County prosecutors and Lewiston police will work together in the coming weeks to develop a different search warrant process for DUI offenses after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling deemed involuntary blood draws unconstitutional. The 8-1 decision, with Justice Clarence Thomas as the dissenting vote, came down last week. The majority cited the Fourth Amendment in its opinion, saying the blood alcohol content test is too invasive to not require a warrant. The original court case argued evidence of driving under the influence is lost while waiting for a search warrant, but the majority ruled some delay is inevitable whether the warrant is obtained or not. [Read the full article in the Lewiston Tribune.](#)

Oregon Lawmakers Approve Driving Privileges For People Without Legal Presence

People in the country illegally could get a driver license under a bill approved Tuesday by the Oregon House. The vote sends the measure to Governor John Kitzhaber. He plans to sign it during a May Day rally in Salem Wednesday. Under current Oregon law, you can't get a driver license if you can't prove you're in the country legally. This bill creates licenses that would be good for four years -- not eight years like normal ones. You also couldn't use one as ID to board a plane or buy a gun. [Read the full article on nwpr.org.](#)

House OK's Four-Year Driver's Cards on 38-20 Vote (Oregon)

Gov. John Kitzhaber will sign a bill today, one year after he pledged to do so, to allow four-year driver's cards for thousands of Oregonians who cannot provide the documents to obtain licenses. The Oregon House gave final legislative approval to the bill on a 38-20 vote Tuesday. Kitzhaber will sign Senate Bill 833 at a May Day rally on the Capitol steps. "This bill helps create secure jobs with upward income mobility, and supports safe, secure communities where people have a sense of common purpose and commitment to one another," Kitzhaber said in a statement after the vote. Under the bill, which takes effect Jan. 1, applicants must meet all other requirements, such as proof of identity, residence in Oregon, and knowledge of traffic laws and driving skills. [Read the full article in the Statesman Journal.](#)

Bill Would Allow Motorcyclists to Drive Between Lanes in Nevada

Nevada lawmakers considered a measure Friday that would allow motorcyclists to skip traffic jams by driving between the lanes - if they are careful. Assemblyman Richard "Skip" Daly, D-Sparks, presented Assembly Bill 236 to members of the Senate Transportation Committee as a safety bill. "When you have the ability to do lane splitting, it increases the statistics about the safety of the road," Daly said. It also addresses overheating problems because many motorcycles are air-cooled and don't do well idling in traffic when it's hot outside, a particular concern for riders in Southern Nevada, he added. The same is true for the riders who often wear heavy leather for safety. The bill would allow motorcyclists to drive up to 10 mph faster than slow-moving traffic and up to a maximum of 30 mph. [Read the full article in the Review Journal.](#)

Governor Inslee Announces New Agency Appointments (Washington)

Governor Jay Inslee announced several new agency appointments today. Pat Kohler was named director of the Washington State Department of Licensing. Kohler has been serving as director of the Washington State Liquor Control Board for more than a decade where she became certified in Lean Six Sigma, the quality-improvement system Inslee is promoting statewide to improve efficiency in each state agency. "Pat's record demonstrates an understanding of how to improve performance, negotiate fair deals and provide top-quality service to the customers and taxpayers of Washington," said Inslee. "The Department of Licensing directly serves every business and resident in our state and it's important these customers feel they're getting what they need in a timely and efficient manner. I have every confidence Pat will deliver on that expectation." [Read the full article at governor.wa.gov.](#)

Did You Know...

- *The month 'May' have been named for the Greek goddess Maia, who was identified with the Roman goddess of fertility, Bona Dea, whose festival was held in May.*
- *In Japan, there is a so-called 'May sickness', where new students or workers start to be tired of their new schoolwork or jobs. (In Japan schoolyears and fiscal years start on April 1st).*
- *May is a character in the Merchant's Tale part of Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. May is young woman who marries a 60 year-old knight Januarie. The name is thought to represent youth opposing her husband's old age. In the tale she weds the old knight but has an affair with his squire, who the Merchant indicates may be the true father of May and Januarie's child.*
- *Celts called it Beltane and the Romans named it Floralia, but May 1 has been known as May Day since the Middle Ages.*
- *In 1543, England built a Maypole that reached 100 feet, the country's tallest. Isaac Newton eventually purchased the pole in 1713 and used it to prop up a massive telescope.*
- *In Hawaii, May 1 is known as Lei Day, a holiday conceived in 1927 by writer and poet Don Blanding for celebrating Hawaiian culture.*
- *Also known as International Workers' Day, May Day has a connection to work that dates back to the late 19th century, when American laborers fought for an eight-hour workday. While the U.S. government moved our holiday, now known as Labor Day, to September, many countries still celebrate the labor movement on May 1.*
- *The first Saturday is the Kentucky Derby.*
- *The second Sunday in May is Mother's Day.*