

New Driver's License requires birth certificate

Radio frequency ID chip to be added

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If you don't know where your birth certificate is, you better find it. Because of new federal ID requirements coming late next year, you're going to need it when your driver's license expires.

That was made even more clear Wednesday when Michigan Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land took a major step in preparing for the change.

Land had two packages of bills introduced on her behalf in the House and Senate that lay the legal groundwork for creating two new versions of the Michigan driver's license.

The first is a standard-issue license with enhanced security features that could be used for domestic air travel because only U.S. citizens, or those legally present in the country, could get it.

The second is an upgraded, optional, and more expensive ID that could be used in lieu of a passport for travel to and from Canada and other Western Hemisphere countries.

"We need to get this in place because the (federal) deadlines are on the horizon," said Land's spokeswoman, Kelly Chesney.

The cost of both new IDs will not be determined until details of the federal law are finalized, but fees will be slightly higher than the current versions because of enhanced security features and the required document

Land is moving forward because it is important to get laws in place so her office has the authority to issue both licenses. Under the federal Real ID Act passed in 2005, state motor vehicle departments are mandated to demand up to four different documents that prove citizenship and residency before issuing a license.

The act also requires all citizens of Western Hemisphere nations that enter the U.S., and all U.S. citizens re-entering the country, to have a passport or special driver's license.

Land has worked out an agreement with the Department of Homeland Security and the Canadian government that, when complete, will allow Michigan residents who frequently travel to and from Canada to use the upgraded version of the state driver's license.

That license will be more expensive because it must contain a radio frequency identification chip, Chesney said.

State Rep. Bill Huizenga, R-Zeeland, said he signed on to co-sponsor the package that authorizes the upgraded license to give people a convenient and less expensive option to getting a passport. It also will keep traffic moving at the Canadian border, he said.

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