

April 3, 2020

## MDRA Legislative Update and Call to Action!

One week ago, the state decreed all deputy registrar offices closed through April 10 and we are now half-way into this shutdown provided it is not extended. While all Minnesotans (and Americans) are all coping and hoping for the best in this uncertain environment, it is yet another added burden for all offices struggling to remain viable.

Prior to last week's announcement, many offices had already pivoted to offering MV services with limited public contact whereby they offered local mail-in and drop-off alternatives. Despite our efforts with our regulators to at least allow this to continue, we were rebuffed. However, during the weekly podcast with DVS this past Tuesday, they seemed willing to reconsider this matter and promised a response with this possible option for offices going forward. **However, even these limited MV service options will remain off limits until we hear otherwise.** All DL and related ID services are basically suspended, facilitated by the recently enacted 60-day grace period for expiring cards.

Most frustrating is the comment from the state that "essential" employees may continue working, and they constitute 78% of the entire work force. Yet deputy registrars are deemed "non-essential" for providing support services to allow the "essential" workers to continue in operation legally. Truckers will need pro-rate services, as will farmers returning to their fields seeking quarterly registrations. Construction vehicles need spring weight permits and while auto dealers may continue some sales in a limited capacity, all these entities must make do without our registration services which is "essential" for law enforcement, bankers, and insurance companies. It is doubtful that the state website and mail operation with their limited staff can adequately address all these functions alone without some deputy participation.

We readily admit that even if we can salvage doing these limited transactions in the short term, it doesn't even come close to maintaining any sense of sustainability in the meantime. However, we are dedicated to contributing to the common need in some manner amidst this pandemic AND it helps keep office relevancy in the overall picture for our future.

**MDRA reiterates that during this time of closure that you continue communicating by email with your local legislators and key lawmakers.** This should be considered as a repetitive effort with these lawmakers—not a "one and done" initiative, but an ongoing one! Solicit your staff to also participate—there are 174 deputy offices in the state, which also represents a work force of over 2,000 who were dutifully employed until last week. Granted, many other sectors of the economy have also been affected. They will also be pressing and competing with us for attention, but we need consideration too, and WE HAVE BEEN SUFFERING SINCE BEFORE THE CURRENT HEALTH CRISIS HIT!

While each of you is best positioned to describe your situation in your emails to lawmakers, here are some key phrases and talking points to possibly incorporate into your personal communications as well:

- *Identify yourself, office location, number of employees, and volume of customers you serve.*
- *Identify if you are a private, non-profit, city, or county deputy registrar operation.*
- *Include years in operation (if private, add if you're a family business and if 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> generation).*

- I have endured MNLARS and the rush for Real ID with unrealistic filing fees as my only income. It doesn't cover my actual costs to remain in business and to serve your constituents.
- I did receive one-time compensation from the state last year, but it only partially reimbursed my actual losses for one year of MNLARS, which is now well into its third year.
  - (If you are a private office, add "and now I have to pay taxes on that this year as well.")
- My office wasn't sustainable before the pandemic hit, and now it is closed for the foreseeable future by the state. My expenses will continue while my office is shuttered.
  - (If you are a private office, include "Low interest business loans aren't an option if I can't repay it after I reopen under current filing fees that I am forced to operate under.")
  - (If you are a public office, include "My local government is growing reluctant to continue subsidizing my office with property tax dollars while they face other critical demands to their budget with the current health crisis.")
- It is essential that my license center with the employees that I had last week return to a business with a sustainable future to pay them from proper filing fees enacted this session which honestly reflect our costs and the work that we do.
- I may permanently lose my trained staff if I cannot retain them with a proper salary. New staff training takes 6-9 months, which will severely impact my ability to serve the public.
- MNLARS transferred 40% more data entry work to deputy registrars, and its replacement this coming fall will only continue and expand upon that trend.
- Real ID transactions, though now delayed for full implementation by one year, will resume and continue to take two to three times longer for us to process.
- My office must invest in new state mandated equipment, such as scanners and laser printers without the resources or budget to do so. Office remodeling is also needed for health concerns.
- Deputy registrars like myself have been advocating for filing fee increases for the last two years, and we cannot hold out any longer. We struggled before the coronavirus hit, now I'm on my knees because of it, but if you don't act this session, we will face the reality to permanently close by this fall, if not sooner. Sadly, this holds true not only for me, but for many of my fellow deputies across the state as well.
- I seek your call or return email to describe further with you. Provide contact info. Thank you.

If you need to find contact information for your state lawmakers, please visit [www.house.mn](http://www.house.mn) or visit [www.senate.mn](http://www.senate.mn) and follow the link for "**who represents me?**" on bottom of their home page (either site will work). Remember, this link will also feature **federal** lawmakers who **DO NOT** need to be contacted.

Your email to your state representative and state senator may be a single email to both. Consider using "DEPUTY REGISTRAR CRISIS" as your subject line. **In addition** to your local state lawmakers, we encourage you to also copy the following key lawmakers with that same communication as well:

Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka  
 Senator Scott Newman  
 Senator John Jasinski  
 Representative Frank Hornstein

[sen.paul.gazelka@senate.mn](mailto:sen.paul.gazelka@senate.mn)  
[sen.scott.newman@senate.mn](mailto:sen.scott.newman@senate.mn)  
[sen.john.jasinski@senate.mn](mailto:sen.john.jasinski@senate.mn)  
[rep.frank.hornstein@house.mn](mailto:rep.frank.hornstein@house.mn)

Please blind copy MDRA with your email for our internal tracking at [mndeputyregistrars@gmail.com](mailto:mndeputyregistrars@gmail.com).

\*You might want to consider attaching any relevant photos that underscore your message as well!\*

Thank you, deputies, stay healthy and keep the faith in these trying times. Please take a moment during this down time and do these emails. **DO NOT SIMPLY CUT AND PASTE THE ABOVE TALKING POINTS AND SUBMIT YOUR EMAIL. RATHER, USE IT AS A GUIDE TO HELP CREATE YOUR OWN COMMUNICATION.** Your future, as well as your staff and the customers who rely on you, needs it. This greatly complements MDRA ongoing efforts to help secure a stable and viable future for all deputies!