



Plate Talk



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Official Publication of the Minnesota Deputy Registrar's Association

From the President's desk...

Greetings Minnesota Deputy Registrar's and Staff!

The MDRA Board and Advisory Committee would like to welcome you to attend the Annual MDRA "Day on the Hill" scheduled for March 13, 2023.

The "Day on the Hill" gives the Deputy Registrar Community an opportunity to communicate directly with lawmakers to communicate the need for Deputy Registrar Fee increases.

Governor Walz did appoint a new Department of Public Safety Commissioner. Commissioner Bob Jacobson had a long career in law enforcement. Commissioner Jacobson came out of retirement to take the lead at the Department of Public Safety. MDRA representatives have a tradition of meeting with the Commissioner and DPS leadership to review legislative goals prior to the legislative session. MDRA Leadership is currently seeking to meet Commissioner Jacobson in person or on line to introduce our organization and goals for 2023.

The Governor's budget for the Department of Public Safety did include increases for Drivers License Transactions. Interestingly, fee increases were not included for either motor vehicle renewals or long transactions. MDRA Lobbyist James Hirst and the MDRA Legislative Committee lead by Mike Hintz have detailed strategies for increases for motor vehicle transactions. The meeting with Commissioner Jacobson will review these motor vehicle strategies.

In the landmark January 2023 MDRA Board meeting held at the Blaine Deputy Office, the MDRA Board met jointly with the DRBOA (Deputy Registrars Business Owners Association) Board to review the Legislative Goals for 2023. This meeting was exceptional in that it was very well attended both in person and on line. MDRA Secretary Mike Hintz coordinated the online portion with a camera system that directs the camera to the individual speaking. The MDRA Board is committed to continuing the online portion to allow individuals from around the State to attend these meetings. Special thanks to John Lenarz of Anoka County for making a meeting room available and to Mike Hintz for his ongoing work to provide online meetings.



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President's Message (cont'd)

The MDRA Board continues to work with DPS Staff on the computer program upgrades to MNDRIVE termed SQR upgrades. Deputies who assist in this area include: MDRA Vice President Jeff Lenarz, MDRA Communications Director Joseph Heider, Jared O'Reilly, Amanda Berry, and Erin Hintz Olson.

MDRA Board Members have reviewed challenges with the MNDRIVE system slowness with DPS Leaders when enhancements are performed. In some cases, the enhancements create a slow down in program function as occurred the last Friday in December. DPS leadership has determined that Deputies should report system slowness to the business liaisons so work can begin quickly on system repairs.

Looking ahead, the MDRA Board has been invited to hold the June 15th MDRA Board Meeting in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 11:00 at Sleepy Eye Brewing Company. Special thanks to Vickie Kral for this gracious invitation. The MDRA Board extends an invitation to offices in the southern Minnesota area to attend this meeting.

Thanks again to the MDRA Board, MDRA Advisory Committee, the MDRA Membership, MDRA Lobbyist James Hirst, and most important the MDRA Membership for their patience and perseverance as we continue our efforts to obtain legislative change to provide financial stability for the Minnesota Deputy Registrar Offices.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Orth

MDRA President



Legislative Committee

Jim Hirst~ Lobbyist
Mike Hintz~ Chair

Legislative Committee Report

We return to the capitol this session to complete unfinished business from last session, notably the enactment of recommendations from the Independent Expert Review conducted by Mr. Rick King and his team that were tasked specifically on the matter of deputy registrar operations and sustainability. MDRA believes those recommendations are a starting point to work off and expand from.

At the end of last year's session, a joint house/senate transportation conference committee agreed to a number of those recommendations, only to have the clock run out before session adjournment (a fate that similarly fell to many others besides us as well).

To summarize, that conference committee agreement last year included the following main provisions:

- * DL filing fee increases of \$8 for initial Real ID/EDL
- * DL filing fee increase of \$3 for all other DL transactions
\$7 million of filing fee distribution back to deputies from DVS online transactions, but limited to only two years AND from existing DVS revenues
- * Appeals process concerning permanent revocation of access
- * Free camera and eye examination equipment for any deputy to become full DL agent

With last fall's election that ushered in a DFL majority in the legislature (after split control between republicans and democrats in the senate and house) combined with the reelection of DFL Governor Walz, we face a different landscape this session compared to the past. This removes past partisan obstacles on one hand, but requires new novel thinking in regards to any "sharing" of DVS online filing fees going forward. It also may open up consideration for additional filing fee increases beyond just DL.

DVS (and the Walz administration) remains opposed to sharing any of the ongoing online filing fees with deputies. This was proven when the governor released his next two-year state budget recommendation that only featured the DL filing fee increases, and nothing else.

However, MDRA has not abandoned this aspect of the King report. Rather, we are advancing for consideration a new surcharge of \$5 to be attached to all online transactions with those proceeds (separate and above the filing fee collection) to be distributed back to deputy offices in a manner somewhat similar to the one-time MNLARS compensation. We project such a fund would generate \$15 million annually as opposed to last year's \$7 million for just two years. (Also in comparison, that prior MNLARS fund was for a total of \$13 million—once.)

We believe our new approach addresses the King report recommendation to have DVS share their online filing fees with the extra benefit of also neutralizing DVS opposition regarding their existing filing fee revenue. This will also help long term when online transactions likely become expanded by DVS and grow to our detriment. This \$5 surcharge idea actually has precedent in statute. The recent "kiosk" law enacted two years ago features just such a surcharge above and beyond the filing fee. However, that kiosk surcharge is dedicated to the vendor whereas this online proposal would be dedicated to us.

In discussions with both transportation committee chairs, they have indicated their support for this alternative to the DVS online filing fee sharing recommendation. This alone is a huge advancement for us, but we are not finished!

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Legislative Committee (continued)



While the governor's budget proposal reflects last year's conference committee agreement on DL fees, that "split" increase will realize just over \$4 million in new deputy filing fee income for our DL agents. We believe there should be no split, and rather an \$8 increase across the board for DL transactions. That would generate closer to \$8 million annually. Furthermore, DVS and the governor also seek to make available DL renewals online every other cycle! Once again the drip, drip, drip of more lost filing fee revenue for deputies should this pass. And all the more reason for that \$5 online surcharge to recoup some of these future lost revenues. We are opposed to this online DL expansion regardless. Fortunately, no one is suggesting to place all DL/ID on an 8-year cycle which was being considered last year.

But this online proposal would certainly place them in that manner for us if the customer can skip visiting the DL agent on every other 4-year renewal.

Our traditional filing fee rates for MV also need attention. Notwithstanding a single one-dollar increase for tabs and titles achieved in 2018 with our one-time MNLARS compensation, those fees have otherwise remained unchanged since 2011. Obviously, our operational costs have not remained unchanged since that time. If you factor in the additional 40% workload transferred to offices that was previously done by DVS, surging "no-fee" transactions, increased labor costs and overall inflationary demands; our filing fee component must also be raised- even with the infusion of online surcharge distribution.

MDRA in consultation with DRBOA has agreed to seek increases of \$4 for renewals and \$8 for long apps. We believe this would generate an additional \$12 million in tab renewal fees and \$8 million in long app fees annually statewide for offices at these increased rates.

How do we arrive at these numbers?

* Deputies currently handle the following total transactions statewide every year:

- * Approximately 3 million renewals (\$21 million revenue)
- * Approximately 1 million long apps (\$8 million revenue)
- * Approximately 1 million DL (\$8 million revenue)

* 25% are initial Real ID/EDL

* DVS currently handles 3 million renewals online

* Apply the math accordingly with existing transactions and our proposed increases:

- * 3 million renewals times proposed \$4 fee increase=\$12 million
- * 1 million titles/pro-rate times proposed \$8 fee increase=\$8 million
- * 1 million DL times proposed \$8 fee increase=\$8 million, or:
 - * "Split" version would be 250,000 Real/EDL times \$8=\$2 million; and
 - * "Split" version would be 750,000 other DL times \$3=\$2.25 million=\$4 million+

* DVS currently captures 3 million online renewals times the \$7 filing fee which equals \$21 million, an amount that otherwise would go to support the deputy network.

NOTE: These calculations only pertain to MV and DL with DVS. Separately we are also seeking consideration for increased filing fees with all DNR related vehicle renewals and registrations, which have largely been unchanged for 20 years. (More on that later in this article!)

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Legislative Committee (continued)



As previously stated, MDRA believes the \$5 surcharge for online transactions is key to our long-term survival and we have succeeded in convincing the transportation chairs of this component as it pertains to the King recommendation on that topic while also addressing DVS not wanting to “share” their existing and ongoing filing fee revenue.

Furthermore, we have DL fee increases (albeit spit) in play from the governor’s recommendation, but we are pressing for a uniform increase of \$8 rather than a split increase between types. This becomes all the more essential for us should the DVS optional online DL renewal proposal become reality (and this would also being subject to the \$5 online surcharge and increase the deputy fund accordingly).

That leaves reaching consensus on our filing fee increases for short and long apps, as well as addressing the same for DNR. Earlier this session, bills were actually introduced on MV and DL filing fees that proposed increases of \$3 for renewals, \$6 for long apps, and \$8 for all DL. They were introduced by a newly elected member without consulting anyone, but it’s very much appreciated! While not the full amount we seek, they nonetheless come rather close! These bills are identified as SF 918 (Gustafson) and HF 1235 (Curran) and were referred to the transportation committee. The authors acted after learning of our plight on the campaign trail from member office White Bear Lake. (Thank you WBL for your proactive involvement with your local lawmakers!)

The governor’s budget bill containing the administration’s transportation budget proposal was just introduced last week and is identified as SF 1946 (Dibble) and HF 1992 (Hornstein). (*This contains the split DL fee increase and the optional online DL renewal every other cycle.*) This bill will serve as the basis for the committee’s omnibus transportation bill, but with many changes and amendments over the next two months.

We continue to await the introduction of legislation reflecting last year’s conference committee agreement from Sen. John Jasinski who will also share it with Rep. Steve Elkins. This will include the provisions mentioned at the beginning of this report. We are at the mercy of the legislative revisers office who is charged with drafting and jacketing all bills for introduction. That office has been backlogged since the start of session, but we anticipate it arriving any day. Though this holding pattern is frustrating, it’s a matter we have to contend with. Fortunately, both transportation chairs are aware of this delay, they do not fault us, and have personally committed that last year’s agreement which this bill will reflect to be acted upon this session. Ultimately, elements of this bill will be incorporated into the chairs’ omnibus bills.

A similar delay is affecting our DNR fee increase bill, which we have already submitted to the revisers office. That bill seeks increases that would place those filing fees on par with current MV filing fees. This legislation would go to an entirely different committee (environment) once introduced.

To summarize, we have a lot of moving parts this session. We have commitments from key committee chairs already in place regarding critical aspects of our legislative agenda. With one-party control of state government, partisan gridlock of past sessions may finally be overcome this year. **HOWEVER**, we must continue to push forward and ensure we achieve the best outcomes this session. **YOUR** personal involvement will determine the degree of our success. Please participate elsewhere in *Plate Talk* with “Have you called your Lawmakers?” and try attending our annual MDRA Day on the Hill next month!



Day on the Hill

MDRA

“DAY ON THE HILL”

MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2023

10AM-4PM

STATE CAPITOL COMPLEX—ST. PAUL, MN

Please join your fellow deputy registrars as we engage in the legislative process for our annual day at the capitol as we press for our issues with legislators!

MDRA Reserved Room (all day) Room 400N, State Office Bldg. (SOB)

This hearing room (4th floor across from the elevators) will serve as our base of operations all day. The SOB is directly across the street (west) from the capitol and has tunnel connections to the full complex.

In advance of Day on the Hill: Please contact your lawmakers and make an appointment to see them! If their schedule is booked, ask if their aide can assist you in pulling them out of committee that day for a brief meeting outside that hearing room or from chamber during floor session (very common).

- * Day will start with group welcome and overview in Room 400N.
- * MDRA will supply hand-outs in Room 400N for you to share with your legislators. This room will also serve for “group meetings” with key lawmakers, subject to any “last minute relocation” to accommodate them.
- * Speakers include both House and Senate Transportation chairs and other key lawmakers.
- * Both House and Senate floor sessions are also scheduled that day in the capitol.
- * Senate Transportation Committee meets that afternoon.

Unfortunately, Room 400N does not permit food and beverage inside it. Lunch will have to be on one’s own this year at either the MNDOT or the Capitol cafeteria close by.

This event will not offer a remote access option since various portions of the day’s activity will be away from Room 400N. Casual attire is acceptable and definitely wear comfortable shoes! Coats and other personal effects may be left in Room 400N while attendees are elsewhere.

Parking is recommended in Lot AA (\$8 daily, credit/debit card only). It is located across the street from the SOB near the intersection of University Avenue and Rice Street. The “green” line light rail also stops at the capitol for those so interested in a transit alternative!



Call your Legislator talking points

DEPUTIES! HAVE YOU CALLED YOUR LEGISLATOR TODAY?

Minnesota lawmakers need to hear from you and learn why your office needs their critical support in this current legislative session!

Keep it simple and professional. Provide them the facts (in your own words) with this as a guide:

Identify yourself, your office location, number of staff, and # of customers you serve

I provide a needed local service for our community and the State

I must cover all my office costs with only a filing fee that the State determines

My operation (like most others) cannot continue anymore in this manner. Why?

My operating losses continue to spiral upwards

Loss of regular income to DVS online operations

Half of all tab renewals now go to DVS, with that filing fee

40% increased workloads shifted onto me from DVS as well

Expanded work without any compensation

Stagnant filing fee rates in statute

No meaningful increase in over 10 years

More and more “no-fee” transactions occurring for me

Time expended with no revenue realized

Inflationary factors across the board

Shrinking revenues + Rising costs = Unsustainable operations

Trend continuing and accelerating even more now

State established deputy offices to operate at no loss with this filing fee revenue

Reality demands updating this arrangement

Independent review (King report) confirms this situation

PLEASE HELP ME BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

4 offices have already permanently closed across MN

Please share my story with your transportation chair and encourage:

Placing a \$5 surcharge with DVS online for deputy compensation

Provides us partial reimbursement in this category

Raise filing fees to cover our past losses and ongoing increased costs

NEED TO KNOW WHO YOUR STATE SENATOR AND STATE REPRESENTATIVE ARE?

Visit either www.senate.mn or www.house.mn and follow the prompts on their home page for “who represents me?” Either site will provide you with their names AND office phone number. Call and converse or leave a message for them to call you. **PHONE CALLS WORK BETTER THAN EMAILS!**



DVS Update

by Beckey Mechtel

Driver and Vehicle Services' (DVS) mission is to deliver customer-focused driver and vehicle services by optimizing technology and building efficiencies that value employees, support business partners and earn the trust of all Minnesotans.

We work with driver's license agents and deputy registrars to provide Minnesotans with options that are convenient and accessible, breaking down barriers to service and making interactions with government less challenging and more satisfying. Together, we serve more than 11 million customers, process 10 million transactions, and collect more than \$2 billion in state revenues.

Current projects put services where people live, simplify correspondence, and make resources available in multiple languages to support all members of our community.

- * **Vehicle Registration Kiosks** – DVS and deputy registrars are making progress with the move to put the self-service kiosks in retail locations. This will increase access to the service, putting it in our shared community spaces, like grocery stores. The service offers tab renewals in Spanish as well as English, but we have opportunity to expand to other languages in the future.
- * **Plain Language Initiative** – This project started last spring. We just finished reviewing and editing nearly all of the approximately 500 deficiency letters generated by MNDRIIVE. We followed plain language guidelines, using common words and short direct sentences. We maintained a customer-centric focus, so anyone who receives a letter from DVS is able to understand it the first time they read it and follow the easy to find next steps to resolve the issue. Going through the plain language process also puts us in a good place should we decide to have letters translated into other languages later.
- * **Group Oral Class D Knowledge Tests** – DVS exam is offering group oral class D knowledge tests at the Anoka, Eagan and Saint Paul exam locations. The service provides groups of three to seven individuals with the opportunity to take the class D knowledge test with an interpreter. DVS made this move to accommodate the needs of the increasing number of resettled Afghans and Ukrainians in Minnesota. Having a driver's license means access to job opportunities, the ability to take kids to school and to participate more fully in our communities. People interested in scheduling a group oral exam will find more information available on our website drive.mn.gov. Select Partner Resources from the Driver and Vehicle Information panel.

For many years, DVS focused on gathering, storing and disseminating data. Today, we engage with you on ideas and solutions that bring better and more accessible service to our communities. Thank you for your support and all the work you do.



Todd's Corner

Howdy ya'all!

I hope everyone is having a blessed 2023 and we are all making it through another Minnesota winter. We are all Minnesota tough and spring is just around the corner!

With February 28 looming on the horizon, I figured I would take a few minutes to talk about weighted renewals.

You all know your jobs very well, and this is not your first renewal rodeo, but I wanted to share a few tips, as well as some insight into a recent system change.



The big system change you may have noticed recently is that we need to have an empty weight in renewals, if it is missing. This was necessary as part of the fix we made to allow you to edit empty weight in renewals and registration changes without having to discard and do a title correction. Unfortunately we have a lot of bad data from Mainframe and MNLARS times, and a lot of folks are defying gravity and driving around in weightless trucks. To clean up that bad data, we did have to make a change that forces an empty weight update in Renewals when it is zero. Empty weight can be found on the sticker inside the driver door. If neither you nor the customer knows for sure, don't fret! Enter 6,000 for pickups, 11,000 for truck/tractors without a sleeper compartment, and 17,000 for trucks with a sleeper compartment to get a weight on the record.

One tip I wanted to share is the requirement to view the IRS form 2290 for HVUT. Thanks to the Chanhassen office's suggestion, you may have noticed we changed the wording in renewals from "Was HVUT collected?" to "Was HVUT viewed?" As of rollout, we no longer require you to keep copies of HVUT forms in your office. In addition, while most farmers are exempt from paying HVUT, they still have to file the form every year, and you should be viewing these forms any time the question presents. Thanks again to Kate Moulder in Chanhassen for the suggestion! Yee-ha!

I also wanted to remind you not to forget about all those rustlers who participate in the partial pay program. There are not a whole lot of them out there, and some of them are probably your regulars, but we will be seeing them again soon. I am hopeful most of the system issues have been fixed and partial pay renewals are as wonderful as grandma's homemade lefse. Check out the help topic, *Procedures; Registration; Trucks; Partial Pay* for the rules and instructions.

We all know this is the busiest month of the entire year and we all scramble around like a cat in a room full of rocking chairs, but we will get through it yet again just like Minnesota winter. We've got this!

Thank you again for the opportunity to share tips. I look forward to the next Plate Talk!



Save the Date ... June 15, 2023

MDRA Board hits the road to Sleepy Eye Minnesota

The MDRA Board has been invited to hold the June 15th MDRA Board Meeting in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 11:00am at the Sleepy Eye Brewing Company located at 121 Main Street West. All deputies are invited and encouraged to attend. Further information will be sent out by our Communications Director as the time draws near.

Fun fact:

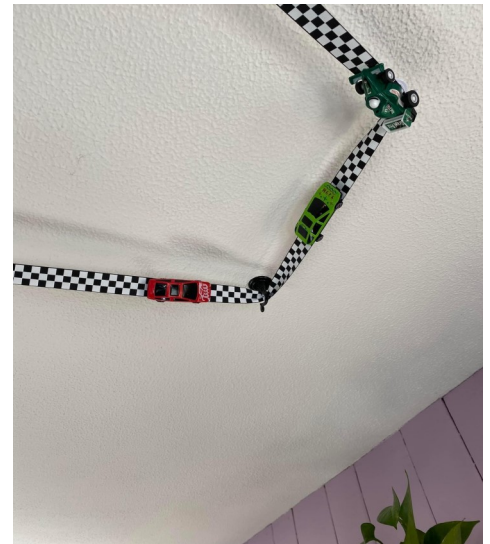
This town is named after Chief Sleepy Eye, a Dakota leader who lived in the area during the 1850s. He had a medical condition that gave him heavy eyelids, and his indigenous name was "Ish-Tak-ha-ba," which translates to sleepy eyes.



Just for Fun.....

Here's a cute idea!

Sandi McQuatters from Deputy #74 Grand Marais got creative when they took down their plexi glass. The hooks were still in the ceiling and a bit unsightly. The office now has a fun feature for all to enjoy! If your office has "fun" or creative things you'd like to share, send it to Joe Heider at: joseph.heider@hennepin.us and it may be included in the next issue of Plate Talk!



MDRA MISSION STATEMENT

The Minnesota Deputy Registrars Association (MDRA) is a statewide membership organization promoting common interests of deputy registrars in providing professional licensing service to the public and liaison to the state.

FEB

10,000 lakes

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We're on Facebook



Check us out!

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