

# PLATE TALK

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# A Message from the President

Written by Jeff Lenarz



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We've officially crossed the midpoint of winter here in Minnesota (hopefully the coldest stretch is behind us!). The days are getting a little longer, the sun feels just a bit stronger, and I've heard a few people start to mention some strange word: "Spring". This time of year always feels like a transition to me. I still bundle up before walking out the door, I still navigate some snow and ice, but I'm also starting to look ahead to what's next.

Over the next few months, we'll see the rollout of the DNR/PayIt system. Major system launches always bring a mix of anticipation, cautious optimism, and a fair number of questions. As front-line service providers, we know that new technology can lead to efficiency and modernization — but it also requires patience, training, and adaptability. Our association will continue working closely with the DNR to ensure your voices are heard and the transition is as smooth as possible for both staff and customers.

At the same time, we're preparing for the upcoming legislative session at the Minnesota Legislature. Our primary focus remains clear: pursuing fee sharing from DVS. Deputy registrars

continue to deliver critical services on behalf of the state, and sustainable funding is essential to maintain operations, invest in staff, and serve our communities effectively

We recognize the realities ahead. A short legislative session combined with an election year makes any significant policy movement challenging. That said, our advocacy efforts will remain steady and strategic. Even in difficult political environments, progress is built through consistent engagement, clear messaging, and unified voices. Your stories, your data, and your continued professionalism strengthen our position every time we step into a conversation with lawmakers.

As we look ahead to warmer days and the momentum that comes with them, I remain confident in the strength of our association and the dedication of our members. Thank you for the work you do every day on behalf of the communities you serve and for your continued engagement in our shared mission.

Here's to a productive session, a smooth system launch, and the promise of spring just around the corner. I hope you enjoy this edition of Plate Talk!

**Jeff Lenarz President, Minnesota Deputy Registrar's Association**



# MDRA Legislative Committee

**Jim Hirst - Lobbyist      Jeff Orth - Chair**

The 2026 Minnesota legislative session will soon convene for a “short” session that begins February 17 and it must adjourn by May 18. Last year, during their “long” session the legislature passed the state’s current two-year budget. With this biennial task complete, lawmakers tend to focus more on policy issues in the even numbered years. However, some budget related issues may still arise and possibly a bonding bill.

Our political landscape in Saint Paul remains the same as last year, with an evenly tied House composed of 67 GOP members and 67 DFL members (134 total members). The Senate also remains closely divided with 34 DFL members and 33 GOP members (67 total members). This dynamic will greatly hamper passage of any legislation in 2026 unless it is broadly noncontroversial and bipartisan. To complicate this even more, all legislative seats will be on the ballot this November, as will all executive branch offices (governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and auditor).

MDRA intends to navigate this challenging political environment by laying the groundwork this year for a pair of critical (budget related) matters that are essential for deputy registrars statewide in advance of that 2027 budget session. Those issues are:

1. **Establish permanent revenue sharing for all deputies from DVS filing fee revenues derived from their online and mail-in transactions.** This was a key recommendation from both legislatively mandated King Report and Berry-Dunn report. However, it has consistently been opposed by our DVS “partners” ever since the reports’ release. It is a critical component though that is necessary for our long-term viability.
2. **Increase the filing fees for all DNR registrations and renewals.** These have largely been neglected for 20 years (9 years for snowmobiles) and cannot be ignored any longer. With the anticipated launch of the new DNR system (Pay-it), our operations must be compensated accordingly, and we will explore the application of revenue sharing as well on DNR should their new system begin to circumvent in-person DNR renewals by any new DNR online options.



Jim Hirst - Lobbyist



Jeff Orth - Region Nine



## Legislative Committee continued

While MDRA pursues those proactive measures, it is important to realize there could be other issues that we will need to respond to as well. These include most notably the following two concerns:

1. **E-titles for motor vehicles**, which surfaced last year as an initiative from Carvana and could greatly reduce revenues and responsibilities for deputies if not properly designed. Our continued roles as auditor and fraud prevention experts in these transactions must be maintained with appropriate compensation accordingly should this be considered.
2. **Online DL renewals**, which DVS floated last year as an expansion of their online choices for citizens. We prevailed over the last session on this issue by demanding such an expansion **MUST** include revenue sharing with DL agents if it advanced. Lawmakers chose not to expand this online option last year, but DVS may attempt to revive it again.

In closing, please mark your calendar for our **2026 MDRA Day on the Hill** and join us as we press our lawmakers for their help and understanding on these key issues confronting us!



Jim Hirst - Lobbyist



Jeff Orth - Region Nine

# 2026 MDRA DAY ON THE HILL

Wednesday March 11<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am to 3:00pm

We again will meet in the League of MN Cities office building (at 145 University Avenue, Saint Paul) in the morning for the monthly MDRA board of directors meeting with free parking and lunch provided before we head to the capitol complex two blocks away in the afternoon. More details to follow!

Thank you, members! Please participate with us and remember to engage with your lawmakers accordingly—especially when we issue any legislative alerts to take action!

MDRA Legislative Committee - Jim Hirst, MDRA lobbyist



# Committee Spotlight

## DNR with Josh Orth



Josh Orth - Region Three

Greetings all, over the past year and following into the beginning of 2026, the DNR committee has been working hard on the new upcoming DNR system. I know everyone's a bit anxious about getting a new system from the DNR. We have been working closely with the MNDNR team along with individuals from the vendor Payit.

At the beginning of 2025, we were able to get our hands on a sandbox version of the new system and pointed out issues that needed to be addressed. While they have fixed many issues, we have still yet to see important pieces like the Daily reports page, as well as get to work on the Game and Fish system. We were able to push back the starting date of the new system to sometime 1st quarter of 2026. Still haven't heard a specific starting date. Our focus has been to make sure the new system will be ready for all offices across Minnesota.

Currently we just wrapped up a meeting with DNR/Payit. The meeting went well but still addressed a couple of transactional hiccups. We will have upcoming meetings to try and work out the kinks in the system. DNR mentioned they will have a training session eventually for all deputies' to get fully trained in on the new system.

DNR is willing to work with us to fix parts of the system in the regard if its serious hard stop transactions that need to be fixed on the system for a transaction to be processed. Ultimately we may have hiccups on certain transactions that normally work seamlessly currently; but with the new system DNR wants to push it out as soon as they can even if we have minor issues processing certain transactions.

Looking forward we will be trying to push for a filing fee increase with all DNR transactions. The last time we got an increase for DNR was 2003! Meanwhile DNR has increased all watercraft/off road vehicles/snowmobile transactions over the past 20 years while ours has stayed the same. Talking to Assistant Commissioner of DNR Bob Meier, he agreed we are overdue for a filing fee increase.

Lastly, I reached out to Justin Badini on the shipping of the next year colored roll stickers to be sent out earlier for the coming years. Many offices have complained over the past couple of years about receiving the stickers later in the year. We came to the idea of pushing for a November 15th delivery date of next year's stickers. We are trying to make sure we don't have deputies getting stickers at the last minute before the New Year.

Please reach out if you have any questions, concerns or ideas about DNR/GF. We encourage getting input from all members.

-Josh Orth



# TODD'S CORNER



Todd Oseby - Trainer & Business Analyst  
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**Howdy ya'all!** I don't know about you but I was very eager to put 2025 out to pasture like a worn out old thoroughbred. Between the RealID stampede, extra training, staff turnover, never ending procedure changes, and general heightened stress, I am sure many of you were also ready to say hasta la vista to 2025 as well!

As we begin to hit the dusty trail of 2026, I mainly want to say thank you to all of you for your endless patience, inexhaustible endurance, and adaptability to meet change. The DVS world is like Minnesota weather. If you are comfortable or used to it, just wait. It will change just as sure as biscuits go with gravy. As it continues to change and evolve, I know all of you will meet it head on and persevere. I am also confident that ya'all are ready to meet the busy month of renewals, with an additional hope that there isn't a significant decline in your volume.

Exciting news! I have recently shared the first version of motor vehicle training for new employees with some of you for review and feedback. I got great feedback from a couple of folks and will wait a couple more weeks for any additional feedback. Once that is done, I will be ready to build my demos, and upon completion of that, I can start putting dates on the calendar and sending them out. I am really hopeful that this will take some pressure off of your offices.

I also wanted to share that I have been directed to start building curriculum for DLA Certification. This initial class will be modeled after Title Certification. Unlike Title Cert though, employees can take it immediately, with no minimum time on the job. Terms and conditions apply, see store for details 😊 This one is a biggie and will take me some time to develop and get vetted, but once done, will be perfect for new employees. At this point, making it a requirement would require an update to the DLA agreements, so for now it will be optional. My initial deadline was to have it complete and ready to train by calendar year's end. I will be working hard to get it done long before that, and once my content outline is approved I will be getting it done faster than a barefoot jackrabbit on a hot griddle in August.

In closing, I just want to say that I am humbled to have gotten to know so many of you and truly appreciate your hard work and all you go through every single day! I look forward to working with you and seeing you in TwT in 2026!

**Happy trails!**

**-Todd Oseby**

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**MDRA has officially transitioned to a new email address as of January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026**

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**Please use this email address for all future correspondence**

And check us out online at [www.mndep.com](http://www.mndep.com) for all the monthly meeting links monthly meeting minutes, past Time with Training episodes and so much more!

Does your office need a password for the website? Email [communications@mndep.com](mailto:communications@mndep.com) and let them know!

We're on Facebook! To get started, search MDRA on Facebook.

You will be prompted to answer a couple of simple membership questions before getting access.