



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ACT MEMO

2019 Wisconsin Act 5
[2019 Senate Bill 4]

**Motor Vehicle Immobilization
Devices**

BACKGROUND

Current law authorizes a city, village, town, or county (local governmental unit) to prohibit, by ordinance, any unregistered motor vehicle from being located upon a highway. It also authorizes a local governmental unit to provide for, by ordinance, the immobilization, removal, and disposal of an unregistered motor vehicle. A local governmental unit may also enact an ordinance that provides for the immobilization or removal, impoundment, and disposal of a vehicle owned by a habitual parking violator.¹ If a local governmental unit enacts an ordinance to authorize the immobilization for either an unregistered motor vehicle or motor vehicle owned by a habitual parking violator, the only type of immobilization device that may be used is a device or mechanism which immobilizes a motor vehicle by locking around a wheel, thereby making the motor vehicle inoperable, commonly referred to as a “boot.”

Current law also specifies who is authorized to immobilize an unregistered motor vehicle or a motor vehicle owned by a habitual parking violator. With respect to vehicles owned by a habitual parking violator, a local governmental unit may contract with a third party for the provision of immobilization services. For unregistered motor vehicles, however, the statutes provide that the immobilization device must be placed by the municipal or university police officer, sheriff’s deputy, county traffic patrolman, state traffic officer, conservation warden, or parking enforcer who discovers any unregistered motor vehicle located upon a highway.

¹ A “habitual parking violator” means a “person who has received, more than 60 days previously, five or more citations for nonmoving traffic violations that remain unpaid and for which the person has not scheduled an appearance in court in response to the citations.” [s. 349.139 (1) (a), Stats.]

This memo provides a brief description of the act. For more detailed information, consult the text of the law and related legislative documents at the Legislature’s Web site at: <http://www.legis.wisconsin.gov>.

2019 WISCONSIN ACT 5

2019 Wisconsin Act 5 expands the type of immobilization devices that may be used to immobilize either an unregistered motor vehicle or a motor vehicle owned by a habitual parking violator. Specifically, the act allows a local governmental unit to immobilize such motor vehicles with either: (1) a “boot”; or (2) a device that immobilizes a motor vehicle by being placed upon the front windshield to obstruct the driver’s view through the windshield.

The act also authorizes a local governmental unit or university to enter into a contract with a person for the placement and removal of an immobilization device on an unregistered motor vehicle. Such contracts may allow for remote unlocking and removal of an immobilization device.

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