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Testimony before the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

Senator André Jacque

January 17, 2024

Chairman Tomczyk and Committee Members:

Thank you holding this public hearing on Senate Bill 153, which would ratify Wisconsin's participation in the national Driver License Compact (DLC).

The DLC requires member states to share with each other all traffic convictions and license suspensions or revocations for offenses that include drunk driving.

Because Wisconsin does not share this critical information to the same effect as compact members, individuals have been able to slip through the cracks and receive licenses, with tragic consequences. **Currently, Wisconsin is one of only four states not engaged in this compact.**

These notifications will help prevent offenders from bringing their reckless - and potentially deadly - behavior into Wisconsin from another state, and give law enforcement and courts more information to protect the public from chronic offenders. This legislation is strongly supported and requested by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

The interstate Driver License Compact is a contract between states that enforces OWI/DUI convictions out of state by agreeing to honor the OWI/DUI license suspension requirements in the state in which the DUI took place. The compact creates uniformity and reduced administrative costs so that each driver, nationwide, has only one driver license and one driver control record.

Adding Wisconsin to the interstate Driver License Compact will close a dangerous loophole, improve data sharing and best practices moving forward, and help keep dangerous drivers off the road -- in Wisconsin and every member state.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 153. I would be happy to answer any questions.

CARS

The Shocking Reason Why Some of the Most Dangerous Drivers Keep Their Licenses

1:42 PM EDT on August 19, 2020



Source: [Jimmy Emersen/Creative Commons.](#)

By **Kea Wilson**



An unknown number of U.S. drivers who have lost their licenses in one state are being allowed to keep them another, thanks to a little-known bureaucratic loophole, a new documentary reveals.

In the short-form documentary *Blind Spot* and accompanying written coverage, a team of investigative journalists at the Boston Globe explored the heartbreaking stories of a family who lost three loved ones — and one man who lost the use of a limb — to collisions with drivers whose licenses had been revoked for heinous crimes like excessive speeding and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

But because those drivers either 1) lived in, or 2) committed traffic crimes in states that decline to participate in the Interstate Driver's License Compact, they were allowed to easily re-apply for licenses and legally return to the road, where they quickly claimed the lives of other road users.

One of the killer drivers profiled in the documentary, Timothy Vandervere, had his Illinois-issued license revoked by Wisconsin police following a long string of convictions for dangerous driving in the neighboring state — but because Wisconsin opted not to communicate the news to the Illinois department of motor vehicles, the Land of Lincoln allowed him to renew his license multiple times before he killed three members of the Rizzo family while traveling 100 miles per hour with a blood alcohol level four times the legal limit.

The other driver, commercial truck driver Volodymyr Zhukovskyy, had been cited three times in less than two months in both Texas and Connecticut for driving under the influence of drugs like Fentanyl — but he stayed behind the wheel because his license was issued in Massachusetts, which does not

participate in the record-sharing agreement. He killed seven motorcyclists in a New Hampshire crash shortly thereafter.

But Vandervere and Zhukovskyy are certainly not the only dangerous drivers who the bureaucratic loophole have allowed to become killers. The Globe identified seven other victims of dangerous drivers who stayed on the road despite out-of-state license revocations, and noted that "there are unquestionably many more, but restrictive state rules on access to driver data make compiling a true tally almost impossible." In addition to Wisconsin and Massachusetts, departments of transportation in Georgia, Michigan and Tennessee have also chosen not to communicate with other states — and no federal law compels them to do so.

It's not clear why those five states elected to endanger its (and other states') road users, but some of the documentary's interviewees inferred it was a matter of money, bureaucratic inefficiency, and lack of federal oversight.

"We do not have a federally mandated or resourced system for states to exchange information about problem drivers," said Stephanie Pollack, secretary and CEO of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, which is spearheading an effort to make the state's drivers' records more accurate. "I don't know about legally, but morally, yes — I feel responsible for the motorcyclists who were killed in New Hampshire [by Zhukovskyy]."

But even states that *do* participate in the national compact may not have accurate records of their drivers' dangerous past behavior.

The Globe's investigation found that 13 states and the District of Columbia have accumulated dangerous backlogs of unrecorded out-of-state offenses, notices of which are usually delivered using the struggling U.S. postal service rather than over email or other forms of secure digital communication, and then input manually. Seven states in the interstate compact, including California, Arizona, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, have attempted to save

time by simply *not sending* notices about infractions committed by drivers from outside the state — though they do *accept* notices of infractions committed by *their* drivers in *other* states, and can technically still claim participation in the compact.

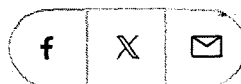
And then there's the perennial issue of the stark differences *between* states' motor vehicle laws, which can result in even *more* incomplete records for dangerous drivers. If a driver from St. Louis, Mo., for instance, gets a citation for using her cell phone while driving across the river in the unrelated city of East St. Louis, Ill., it will be recorded on her Illinois state driving record — but not on her Missouri record, because her home state *has* no law against handheld cellphones for drivers.

Add it all up, and as many as one in 10 drivers may have been cited for a dangerous driving offense that isn't listed on their official records in their home states, the Globe estimates.

Still, advocates are hopeful that these ridiculous loopholes could be closed with strong federal standards — at least for the most dangerous drivers.

"If your license was taken from you in one state, it should be taken from you in every state," said Jim Moran, a former member of Congress from Virginia who attempted to pass federal licensing reforms during his time in office. "There shouldn't be a loophole. You should be held accountable for your actions."

The Globe promises to give supporters of reform more data on the problem in a follow-up story soon, which will focus on the unique impacts of the Interstate Drivers License Compact's failures on the commercial trucking industry.



Kea Wilson

Kea Wilson has more than a dozen years experience as a writer telling emotional, urgent and actionable stories that motivate average Americans to get involved in making their cities better places. She is also a novelist, cyclist, and affordable housing advocate. She previously worked at Strong Towns, and currently lives in St. Louis, MO. Kea can be reached at kea@streetsblog.org or on Twitter [@streetsblogkea](https://twitter.com/streetsblogkea). Please reach out to her with tips and submissions.

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CHUCK WICHGERS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 82nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

January 17, 2024

Senate Bill 740 / Assembly Bill 767

Good morning Chairman Tomczyk and Committee Members,

Thank you for holding a hearing today on Senate Bill 740 relating to personalized registration plate fees for gold star family 'special registration plates.'

The sacrifices our service men and women make go beyond words. Some have made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. One way the State of Wisconsin honors fallen heroes is through a Gold Star license plate. Immediate family members of a person who has died while serving in the US armed forces are eligible for this special group license plate.

Brian Coleman resides in the 5th Senate District and reached out to my office about the \$15 fee he pays every year to personalize his license plate in honor of his son, Chad. Specialist (SPC) Chad Coleman was killed in action in Afghanistan in 2010. Like many other Gold Star families, Chad's father chooses to personalize his license plate. While there is no issuance fee for a Gold Star plate, there is still a \$15 fee for personalization. His question is mine: "Haven't we paid enough already?"

With just 287 personalized Gold Star plates on the road, according to the Department of Transportation, the fiscal impact of this bill is minimal: \$4,305. (There are currently 484 active Gold Star plates on the road, but they are not all personalized.)

Making this change to state law is one small way we can acknowledge the ultimate sacrifice that families have made for the freedom we cherish.

Thank you for listening, and for your consideration of Senate Bill 740.