



Colorado
Legislative
Council
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MEMORANDUM

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October 27, 2008

TO: Senator David Schultheis

FROM: Bo Pogue, Research Associate, 303-866-5390

SUBJECT: Information Contained on Colorado Driver's Licenses
and Identification Cards

This memorandum responds to your question regarding the information contained on driver's licenses and identification cards issued in Colorado. Specifically, you wanted to know what information is contained on the magnetic strip on the back of a driver's license or state-issued identification, and the use of this strip by certain state agencies to verify a person's identity during the course of business. The memorandum provides information requirements for state-issued driver's licenses and identification cards, policies for using social security numbers on these forms of identification, and policies for using information stored on a magnetic strip on the back of these forms of identification by certain state agencies.

Information Contained on Driver's Licenses and Identification Cards

Colorado driver's license. The same information found in printed form on the front of a Colorado driver's license or state-issued identification card is contained in a magnetic strip on the back of the license or card. This excludes images, including the holder's photograph. The following features and information are required by law to be contained on a Colorado driver's license¹:

¹Section 42-2-114 (1)(a)(III), C.R.S.

- a photograph of the licensee;
- a distinguishing number assigned to the licensee;
- the full name, date of birth, and residence address of the licensee;
- a brief description of the licensee;
- the type or general class of vehicles the licensee may drive;
- any restrictions applicable to the licensee;
- the expiration date of the license;
- the official seal of the Colorado Department of Revenue;
- a reference to the previous license issued to the licensee;
- the usual signature of the licensee; and
- one or more security features that are not visible and are capable of authenticating such license and any information contained in the license. These features currently include the magnetic strip, ultraviolet (black light) features for the bottom of the license, and micro-print.

A driver's license may not contain the licensee's social security number, but the social security number is used by the Department of Revenue to verify the licensee's identity upon application for the license, as required by state law². Until 2005, the licensee had the option of including his or her social security number on the license. This option was repealed in Senate Bill 05-047.

State identification card. State law requires a state-issued identification card to contain the following:

- the registrant's picture;
- an adequate description of the registrant;
- the inscriptions "State of Colorado" and "This is not a driver's license.";
- an identification card number; and
- one or more security features that are not visible and are capable of authenticating the card and any information it contains. These security features are similar to those found on the Colorado driver's license.

As with the driver's license, the state identification card cannot contain the registrant's social security number.

Identity Verification by Certain State Agencies

Under Section 24-76.5-103 (4), C.R.S., state agencies are allowed to use state-issued driver's licenses or identification cards when verifying the lawful presence in the United States of recipients of public benefits. Officials for the departments of Human Services and Health Care Policy and Financing indicate that they do not use scanners to read the magnetic strip on the back of such forms of identification during the course of business. Vehicles used by the Colorado State Patrol and some municipal law enforcement agencies are equipped with scanners for identity verification. When the scanner is unable to read the magnetic strip, the officer inputs the information manually from the front of the identification.

²Section 42-2-107 (3)(a), C.R.S.