



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW MEXICO

Driver's Licenses for All: A Public Safety Issue

In the 2012, Legislative Session, the LWVNM opposes:

HB 103 Rep. Nunez Social Security Number for Driver's License

The League of Women Voters supports verification documents, such as status cards, work permits, and driver's licenses that allow immigrants proper identification.

In New Mexico, individuals who choose to drive motor vehicles must be licensed. Being issued a driver's license ensures that:

- Individuals have demonstrated knowledge of the rules and laws of the road by passing the written and road exams successfully.
- Personal information such as name, address and other contact information, and a color photograph, are entered into the Motor Vehicle Department's database for use by law enforcement.
- A driver meets the requirement for purchasing automobile insurance.

Having a New Mexico driver's license is not adequate identification for registering to vote.

In 2003, New Mexico lawmakers passed a bill that allowed a qualified foreign national without a social security number to apply for a New Mexico driver's license. Approximately 90,000 licenses have been issued to foreign nationals since then. The process is more complicated and onerous than for applicants who have social security numbers.

- The applicant must make an appointment with the NM Motor Vehicle Department (MVD).
- At the appointment, the applicant must show a birth certificate, along with a notarized translation, a valid passport or a Mexican consular identification card, an IRS-issued Individual Tax ID Number, and two documents proving residency in the state of New Mexico.
- The MVD verifies the authenticity of the passport and/or the consular ID with the issuing agencies.
- The applicant takes the written and practical driving tests.
- The MVD sends the documents to the Tax Fraud Division of the NM Taxation and Revenue Department for screening and verification.
- Upon verification, MVD **mails** the eligible applicant the driver's license to his/her NM residence.

Only four cases of non-New Mexico residents fraudulently obtaining a driver's license have been found since the law was enacted in 2003. Some proposed ways to further reduce this kind of fraud include:

- Impose a six-month residency requirement for foreign nationals.
- Increase the number of documents allowed to prove residency.
- Enact laws that make submission of a fraudulent driver's application a felony.
- Reduce to two years the duration of a driver's license for foreign nationals without social security numbers and require them to reapply for their licenses under new stricter standards.

Driver's licenses do not prove citizenship or legal immigration status. They do not replace social security numbers, which are required for voter registration, public assistance, and for many other benefits of citizenship. They do assist individuals to prove their identity so that they can cash checks and so forth.

For road safety, it is imperative that those who drive have a current driver's license. The MVD database ensures that law enforcement has access to information about individuals who are involved in traffic and DWI violations, accidents, and vehicular emergencies as well as those who may be suspected of criminal activity.

The League applauds the New Mexico legislature for passing a series of laws that integrate immigrants into New Mexico communities, including the provision of driver's licenses. These laws have had broad bi-partisan support and were passed with the endorsement of law enforcement, faith, business, labor, and community organizations.

Contact Information: Meredith Machen (505) 988-4523 meredith.machen@gmail.com