

ROBERT L. COWLES

Wisconsin State Senator, 2nd Senate District

STANDING COMMITTEES:

Natural Resources & Energy, Chair
Transportation & Local Government, Vice-Chair
Economic Development & Technical Colleges

Testimony on 2023 Senate Bill 123

Senator Robert Cowles

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

April 12th, 2023

Thank you, Chair Tomczyk and Committee Members, for holding a hearing and allowing me to testify on 2023 Senate Bill 123. This bill exempts persons enlisting in the armed forces from the requirement to receive a probationary driver's license.

Senate Bill 123 originated after the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) was approached by leadership from the U.S. Army's Wisconsin Recruiting Command. Army officials informed the Division of Motor Vehicles of recent changes in application requirements for specialized military training programs which require the individual to, at the time of application, possess a valid driver's license which will not expire between the date of application and the anticipated completion of the training program.

Currently, new drivers in Wisconsin are issued probationary driver's licenses which expire about three years from issuance. Only drivers who were licensed in another state or country or who possess a commercial driver's license are exempt from this requirement under current law. For individuals enlisting in the military immediately after graduation from high school, meaning they're about 18 years old, their probationary driver's licenses typically expire while they are in basic training or longer duration specialized training.

The expiration dates of these probationary driver's licenses poses a problem for Wisconsin residents who make the honorable choice to join the military. Drafted last session at the request of the WisDOT, this bill solves this concern by allowing the Division of Motor Vehicles at WisDOT to issue a regular driver's license to individuals who provide documentation of enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces. Through this bill, the Department will be able to assist Wisconsin residents, estimated to be between 1,200 and 1,500 annually, enlisting in the U.S. Armed Forces in entering the training programs of their choice.

2023 Senate Bill 123 is a reintroduction of 2021 Senate Bill 639, which passed the Senate on a voice vote, and 2021 Assembly Bill 715, which passed the Assembly Committee on Transportation on a vote of 13-0.



PATRICK SNYDER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 85th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 123

Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

April 12th, 2023

Chairman Tomczyk and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for taking the time to allow me to testify on a number of bills today.

Senate Bill 123 was originally drafted in the 2021 Session with input from the Department of Transportation from the Department of Transportation (DOT) after the Department was approached by U.S. Army Wisconsin Recruiting Command. Army officials informed the Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) that recent changes in certain specialized military training programs which require an individual to, at the time of application, possess a valid driver's license which will not expire between the date of application and the anticipated completion of the training program. Military enlistees typically have probationary driver's licenses that expire while in basic training or during specialized training after basic. This bill fixes an issue for military members by allow the DMV to issue "regular" driver's licenses to individuals enlisted in the armed forces. This bill, will allow the Department to assist the approximately, 1,200 to 1,500 annual Armed Forces residents in Wisconsin looking to enter the training programs of their choice. Last Session, this legislation unanimously passed the Senate and the Assembly Transportation Committee but was not brought to the Assembly Floor at the end of Session.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.



Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Office of the Secretary
4822 Madison Yards Way, S903
Madison, WI 53705

Governor Tony Evers
Secretary Craig Thompson
wisconsin.gov
Telephone: (608) 266-1114
FAX: (608) 266-9912
Email: sec.exec@dot.wi.gov

Testimony of Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Assistant Deputy Secretary Joel Nilsestuen
Before the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
April 12, 2023

RE: Senate Bill 123, relating to exemptions from the requirement that an original driver's license be a probationary license

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk, and members of the committee for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 123 on behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Currently, new drivers in Wisconsin are issued "Probationary" driver licenses which expire three years after issuance. For individuals enlisting in the military immediately after graduation from high school, their driver licenses typically expire while they are in basic training or a longer duration specialized training. This creates problems since they cannot return to Wisconsin to change their products.

The Department was made aware of this problem when it was approached by the Army's Wisconsin Recruiting Command. Army officials informed DMV of changes in application requirements for specialized military training programs which require the individual at the time of application to possess a valid driver license which will not expire between the date of application and the anticipated completion of the training program.

To solve this concern, this bill would allow Wisconsin DMV to issue a "Regular" driver license to individuals who provide documentation of enlistment in the U.S. Armed Forces

Through this proposal, the Department will be able to assist Wisconsin residents enlisting in the U.S. Armed Forces in entering the training programs of their choice. This number is estimated to be between 1,200 and 1,500 annually,

Thank you again for the time and opportunity to provide this testimony today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.