



## Driver's license office in jeopardy

### County treasurer starts petition to try to save office

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Newton Kansan

The Harvey County treasurer is circulating a petition to persuade federal lawmakers to allow county treasurers to continue to issue driver's licenses and state identification cards.

The Real ID Act passed in May 2005 would require state employees to issue driver's license starting in 2008 that meet new criteria set by the federal government.

Residents in Harvey and other rural Kansas counties could have to drive miles and wait in lines to renew their licenses at regional centers, Becky Noble, Harvey County treasurer, said.

"This will affect everybody — the elderly the handicapped," Noble said. "People may have to take time off work to get their licenses renewed. Imagine how crowded it would be and how long the lines would be."

The Harvey County treasurer's office processed 9,828 licenses in 2005. On a typical day at the office, residents might have to wait five minutes to get their licenses, Noble said.

Forcing residents to travel to another county to renew their licenses could be a hardship for some people, she said.

"It might result in people driving without one because it is too much of a hassle to get one," she said. "I would like to keep it here."

Noble already has collected 1,094 signatures on petitions asking state treasurers be allowed to continue to issue driver's licenses, which is about 3 percent of the Harvey County population, she said.

The petitions, which were distributed across the state by the Kansas County Treasurer's Association in October, will be submitted to Rep. Jerry Moran, R-Kan., sometime before the end of the year, Noble said.

In a letter to Department of Homeland Secretary Michael Chertoff, Moran emphasized the importance of this service to rural Kansans.

"Many Kansans enjoy the convenience of being able to renew their driver's license, change their name or address, or have other license permits processed by their local county treasurer," Moran said in an excerpt of the letter posted on

his Web site. "Kansans should not have to travel long distances to renew their driver's licenses."

According to the Kansas County Treasurer's Association Web Site, 72 counties in Kansas, including Harvey and Marion, have county driver's license offices; 37 have state-run offices, and two counties have no service.

People can sign or pick up copies of petitions at the Harvey County Courthouse treasurer's office.

When asked if she thought it was a conflict of interest for a county official to be circulating this petition, Noble said no.

The county collects a \$3 fee to process the licenses, which goes into the county general fund and helps cover the cost of labor and equipment replacement associated with issuing the licenses.

Noble said she issues the licenses as a public service, and she does not benefit monetarily from the providing the service.

According to a report issued by National Governor's Association, National Conference of State Legislatures and American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators the costs of the new ID system could be as high as \$1 billion initially and \$10 billion during five years.

States can refuse to meet federal standards but could face losing federal aid.

The Real ID Act was a part of a larger defense funding and tsunami relief bill.

At minimum the card will have to include person's name, date of birth, gender, an identification number, digital photograph, address, signature, physical security features and machine readable technology, such as a chip or magnetic strip that can store data.

The act also sets standards for what type of documentation will be required to get licenses, such as documentation of birthplace, proof of social security number and documentation of residence.

The identifications with the new federally approved standards will be required to board airlines, open bank accounts and collect social security

Under the act, each state must agree to share its motor vehicle database with other states, including ID information and motor vehicle violations histories or also risk losing federal aid.

"I could see how this could be an advantage for reasons of security, but we are asking the federal government to allow the state to designate agents to issue the licenses as it does now," Noble said.

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