



## **Damschroder bill would make travel to Canada easier**

### **Lawmaker says enhanced drivers licenses will be cheaper and easier than passports**

By: Tom Jackson  
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State Rep. Rex Damschroder says his bill to let Ohioans obtain enhanced driver's licenses will make travel to Canada cheaper and easier, helping commerce and tourism with our neighbor to the north.

The measure would allow Ohioans to pay an extra \$25 for a license that would have an embedded RFID chip. That would allow them leave their passports behind when they travel to Canada, Damschroder said. Passports cost more than \$100, he noted.

Civil libertarians from the ACLU and Washington's Cato Institute, a libertarian think-tank, argue that the enhanced driver's licenses threaten civil liberties. Damschroder, a Fremont Republican, replies that his proposal would be optional.

"If you don't like the program, don't use it," he said.

Damschroder's House Bill 346 has been approved by the Ohio House's Transportation, Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee and awaits action by the full House and the Senate.

"Sandusky is a big boating area," notes Damschroder.

Boaters who want to venture to Canadian territory would no longer have to worry about taking a passport, or their passport getting wet, he said.

"This is on your driver's license. If it gets wet, it won't matter," he said.

"The majority of Ohioans aren't going to get this," he said. "For those that travel to Canada regularly, this is a great convenience."

A bill analysis by the Ohio General Assembly's staff says enhanced driver's licenses are an alternative to passports for people traveling to Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. It says

optional enhanced driver's licenses have been approved in Michigan, New York, Vermont and Washington.

The Ohio Trucking Association backs Damschroder's bill, said Thomas A. Balzer, the group's president.

It would be cheaper and easier for truckers than having to get a passport for crossing into Canada, he said.

Jim Harper, a senior fellow with the Cato Institute and the author of the book "Identity Crisis: How Identification Is Overused and Misunderstood," thinks Congress made a mistake when it required passports to travel to Canada. Border crossing checks used to be cursory and that made sense, Harper says.

But Harper is not a fan of enhanced driver's licenses and is unconvinced by the argument they would be voluntary.

"The things that are purely voluntary in the early going sometimes get mandatory in the later going," he said.

Harper said Ohio is among the many states that refused to go along with a post 9/11 proposal to create a national ID program.

"Getting Ohio in the enhanced driver's license program is another small step toward national ID," Harper said. "People who care about liberty in Ohio and the country should resist even small steps like this."

Gary Daniels, ACLU of Ohio's top lobbyist in Columbus, has another complaint.

He says enhanced driver's licenses use an RFID chip to store information, a less secure method than what's used in passports. Any RFID chip reader, which is widely available, would be able to pick up your information, Daniel said.

Damschroder says his optional program should be made available to Ohioans who would want it.

"This is going to open up our business corridor," he said. "You won't have to buy a passport, you won't have to carry a passport, you won't have to worry about losing a passport just to go to Canada."