



# *ENACTMENT NEWS*

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## **House Bill 51**

### **Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission, Ohio Department of Transportation & the Ohio Department of Public Safety**

Effective July 1, 2013

On April 1, 2013, the Governor signed into law House Bill 51, which made changes relevant to the Ohio Turnpike Commission, the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Ohio Department of Public Safety, and the State Board of Emergency Medical Services.

The Turnpike Commission was renamed the Ohio Turnpike and Infrastructure Commission and its membership was modified. The State Board of Emergency Medical Services was renamed the State Board of Emergency Medical, Fire and Transportation Services, and subsumed the now-eliminated Ohio Medical Transportation Board.

This bill made many changes to the law, the most notable listed below.

Speed limits on interstate highways are increased:

- 55 mph on freeways in congested areas that are located within a municipal corporation or within an interstate freeway outerbelt;
- 65 mph on freeways in urban areas that are part of an interstate freeway outerbelt;
- 70 mph on freeways that are outside urbanized areas.
- 60 miles per hour on two-lane state routes outside municipal corporations, if the Director determines that this is reasonable

Weight and size limits on interstate highways are increased:

- 50 feet is the maximum length for the operation of certain vehicles on public roads
- A \$100 fee is to be assessed for an application to operate a triple trailer
- Vehicles fueled solely by compressed natural gas can exceed the gross vehicle weight limits and the axle load limits by 2,000 pounds, on some roadways
- A special permit to operate an overweight or oversize vehicle is voidable by law enforcement only for violations of the provisions of the permit

Rules for the control of traffic at toll booths to be promulgated by ODOT:

- Violation of an ODOT rule is a minor misdemeanor on a first offense
- On each subsequent offense, it is a misdemeanor of the fourth degree
- Failure to comply with toll collection rules results in a civil penalty of a fee
- All fines collected for violating state laws and ODOT rules must be disposed of in accordance with law governing State Highway Patrol

- All fees or charges assessed by ODOT because of a civil violation are revenue of ODOT or the public-private operator

Procedures for vehicle registration and license plates:

- A trailer or semitrailer can be registered for any number of years, including permanently, rather than for up to five years as under prior law. Annual registration tax and fees must be paid for each year of registration, but are capped at eight times the annual amount due.
- Non-commercial drivers can be registered for up to 5 years, rather than 2 as under prior law; all annual taxes and fees must be paid for each year of registration, with a service fee of \$5.25 for two years, \$8 for three years, and \$10 for four or five years.
- A \$10 fee will be charged to people who want to keep a distinctive combination of numbers and letters on previously issued license plates when the registration is renewed and new plates are issued; a deputy registrar can retain \$1 of the fee.
- Fees charged for late vehicle registration renewals are reduced from \$20 to \$10 and the grace period is extended from 7 to 30 days.
- A farm bus may be registered from for one 210-day period in any calendar year, rather than two 90-day periods.
- A person with a license from another jurisdiction, recognized by Ohio, may get an Ohio license if he passes a vision screening, gives up his other license, and complies with all other requirements for getting an Ohio license

Increased penalty for theft of special purchase articles (e.g. utility cable or wire, road signs, manhole covers, grocery carts, or beer kegs) or bulk merchandise containers:

- For property valued less than \$7,500, the offense is a felony of the fifth degree.
- For property valued at \$7,500 or more but less than \$150,000, the offense is a felony of the fourth degree.
- For property valued at \$150,000 or more, the penalty is a felony of the third degree.
- Records that scrap metal dealers are required to provide to law enforcement are not public record.
- An individual can apply with a law enforcement agency to have his name removed from the list of known thieves or receivers of stolen special purchase articles or bulk merchandise containers.

The Department of Transportation is allowed to include in any of its contracts a provision for binding dispute resolution. In the event of a contract controversy, if all parties do not agree to the binding dispute resolution, a party having a claim against ODOT must exhaust all its administrative remedies before filing any action against ODOT in the Court of Claims. Under H.B. 51, a technical expert makes a binding determination which cannot be appealed, although the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas can issue an order vacating a determination under certain circumstances.

The bill passed the Ohio House of Representatives 58 - 36 on February 28 and the Ohio Senate 27 – 6 on March 13. It was signed into law on April 1, 2013 and became effective July 1, 2013.