

Fact Sheet AB 2602

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Bill: AB 2602, Disability Parking Placards

Summary: This measure amends the Vehicle Code in several places to address illegitimate use of disabled person parking placards. AB 2602 will create a new, two-tiered disabled person parking placard program to allow only those with severe disabilities to park for free and without time restrictions, while requiring those with less severe disabilities to pay for parking.

Background: Under current law, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) issues disabled person (DP) parking placards, license plates, or both to individuals with permanent and temporary disabilities. Permanent placards are issued to individuals who have impaired mobility due to the loss of limbs, who have diagnosed diseases that interfere with mobility, or who rely on the aid of an assistive device to be mobile. Permanent placards are valid for two years. Temporary parking placards, on the other hand, are valid for up to 6 months, and are issued to individuals with temporary disabilities, such as a broken leg. To obtain a permanent or temporary placard, an individual must obtain the signature of a licensed physician, surgeon, chiropractor, optometrist, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, or certified nurse midwife that has knowledge of the disability or disease. A vehicle displaying any DP placard or license plate may park in spaces marked with a wheelchair symbol or in on-street parking spots for no charge and with no time restrictions.

Today, there are approximately three million disabled placards in use in California. While placards are most often used responsibly and for legitimate reasons, irresponsible and fraudulent placard use is a significant concern, and it poses major hurdles in local jurisdictions' attempts to provide accessible parking to those truly in need. One NBC4 I-Team investigation, for example, caught abusers using placards belonging to friends and relatives, including a child, a deceased relative and a disabled sibling, in two different parts of the Los Angeles area. That report eventually led to a similar DMV sting, which resulted in dozens of confiscated placards. Additionally, a 2013 DMV sting caught 241 people in different metropolitan area throughout the state violating placard laws. These problems are not unique to California, and in response to the same concerns, several jurisdictions have implemented innovative policies for managing accessible parking. California has been a leader among the states in providing equal opportunities to individuals with disabilities. However, equal access under the Americans with Disabilities Act means that local jurisdictions should be able to provide convenient parking for every person with a fundamental disability.

What the Bill Does: This measure will outline a new policy for California's DP parking placard program. AB 2602 outlines a two-tiered approach to DP parking, much like what is in place in Michigan and Illinois, which allows individuals with severe mobility impairments to continue to park for free, while requiring those with less severe disabilities to pay for parking.

Under the bill, drivers who meet certain criteria will be eligible to apply to the DMV for a free sticker, to be affixed to his or her placard, indicating their eligibility for free parking. Those criteria include an individual's inability to manage a parking meter or parking payment center, an individual's inability to reach approach a parking meter due to his or her use of a wheelchair or other device, and an individual's inability to walk more than 20 feet due to an orthopedic, neurological, cardiovascular, or lung condition which impedes his or her ability to walk.

Other individuals with less severe disabilities will still be able to apply to the Department of Motor Vehicles for a DP parking placard. However, under the new system, that placard will only entitle the individuals to preferential parking. It will no longer entitle that person to parking without cost and with without time restrictions. AB 2602 will reduce placard abuse and increase access for those who truly need access to accessible parking spaces.

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