



T E X A S
HOME SCHOOL
COALITION ASSOCIATION
Keeping Texas Families Free

October 1, 2014

Joe Peters, Assistant Director, Chief of Driver License Division
Texas Department of Public Safety
P O Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

Chief Peters,

As you may know, the Texas Home School Coalition Association is a statewide advocacy organization for home educators, with almost 60,000 families on our mailing list. We work to serve the home schooling community and to protect the right of parents to teach their children at home.

It has recently come to our attention that the Texas Department of Public Safety and Texas Department of Motor Vehicles have changed policies that have been in place since 2003 and have in place new policies that unfairly discriminate against home schoolers, forcing them to fulfill different requirements for obtaining driver licenses than public and private schooled students, specifically regarding the Verification of Enrollment (or VOE) form.

At various times over the last few years home schoolers have run into problems in local DPS offices when trying to obtain a driver license, usually due to documentation issues related to the VOE form. However, up until now those issues have been resolved by allowing home schoolers an equal right to use VOE forms as supporting documents for verification of their identity for a license.

In 2003 and 2008 THSC worked with the DPS to resolve this issue, and both times Judy E. Brown, who at the time was chief of the Driver License Division, confirmed that the VOE form was a legitimate form of supporting identification for home schoolers as well as for students of public and private schools. In addition, in 2012, when presented with a similar issue, Marguerite Buster, customer relations coordinator at the Texas Department of Public Safety, told THSC that the VOE form “is still acceptable as long as it is presented along with all other necessary documentation.” Historically, the policy of the DPS/DMV in Texas has been to treat home schoolers in the same manner as any other students and to allow the use of the VOE form as a supporting document for identification.

More recently home schooling families have again experienced problems obtaining driver licenses; once again, the issue has been with the VOE form. In one instance, a parent was told by the Clear Lake DMV office that the VOE form was no longer a valid form of identification for her child and that no education-based documentation would be accepted from the family because the teenager was home schooled. This information is a direct contradiction of longstanding policy and is discriminatory against home schooled students.

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In our most recent contact with the DMV we reached out to Ms. Buster and were informed that the VOE form is no longer acceptable as a supporting document for identification—but that some school records still are. The list of acceptable forms of supporting identification currently posted on the DPS website includes, “School records (e.g., report cards, photo ID cards, etc.).” As previously mentioned, some DPS employees will not allow any form of school records for home school students, but neither local DPS employees nor Ms. Buster provided an alternative for these families to pursue.

Section 51.9142 of the Texas Education Code establishes that the State of Texas “considers successful completion of a nontraditional secondary education to be equivalent to graduation from a public high school” and requires that state colleges treat home school students “according to the same general standards as other applicants for undergraduate admission who have graduated from a public high school.” The State of Texas, including the Department of Public Safety, has established a long history of treating home school students as equal to public school students. We strongly urge that the precedent, which has been in place for more than a decade and has allowed home school students seeking their driver licenses to do so free from discrimination by state employees, will be restored.

I would ask that you, in your capacity as chief of the Driver License Division, clarify the policy regarding acceptable forms of supporting identification, particularly education-based documentation, so that issues like these can be avoided in the future.

We look forward to working with you on this issue, clearing up this confusion, and allowing all students, no matter their method of schooling, to be treated in an equitable manner regarding obtaining a driver license.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Lambert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Tim Lambert

CC: Governor Rick Perry; Mr. Steve McGraw, Commissioner of Public Safety; Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst; Ms. Marguerite Buster, Customer Relations Coordinator, Texas Department of Public Safety; State Representative Larry Phillips; State Senator Robert Nichols; Texas home schoolers