

Senate Bill 224

By: Senators Hudgens of the 47th, Chapman of the 3rd, Rogers of the 21st, Moody of the 56th, Murphy of the 27th and others

AS PASSED

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Title 40 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to motor vehicles and
2 traffic, so as to change the definition of commercial vehicle policy and fleet policy; to repeal
3 Code Section 40-5-71 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to notice of
4 insurance issuance, renewal, or termination of drivers' licenses, and incorporate the
5 provisions thereof in Code Section 40-2-137; to change the term "commercial vehicle policy"
6 to "commercially insured vehicle policy"; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting
7 laws; and for other purposes.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

9 style="text-align:center">**SECTION 1.**

10 Title 40 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to motor vehicles and traffic, is
11 amended by revising Code Section 40-2-137, relating to definitions and notification of
12 coverage termination, as follows:

13 "40-2-137.

14 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

15 (1) ~~'Commercial~~ 'Commercially insured vehicle policy' means a policy of ~~motor vehicle~~
16 ~~liability insurance insuring a motor vehicle that is rated or insured as a business use or~~
17 ~~commercial use vehicle or is licensed by the state as a commercial vehicle~~ insurance that
18 is not dependent on the type of vehicle insured, is written on a commercial coverage
19 form, is issued with an insurance identification card referencing 'commercial' or 'fleet,'
20 and:

21 (A) Insures one or more vehicles not identified individually by vehicle identification
22 number on the policy; or

23 (B) Is subject to adjustment by audit for vehicle changes at the end of the policy
24 period.

1 ~~(2) 'Fleet policy' means a commercial vehicle policy that insures two or more vehicles~~
 2 ~~that are not identified individually by vehicle identification number on the policy or a~~
 3 ~~commercial policy that is subject to adjustment by audit for vehicle changes at the end~~
 4 ~~of the policy period.~~

5 ~~(3)~~(2) 'Lapse' means one or more days upon which the records of the department do not
 6 reflect that a motor vehicle was covered by a policy of minimum motor vehicle insurance
 7 coverage.

8 ~~(4)~~(3) 'Minimum motor vehicle insurance coverage' means minimum coverage as
 9 specified in Chapter 34 of Title 33.

10 (4) 'Owner' has the meaning provided by paragraph (39) of Code Section 40-1-2 except
 11 that such term shall mean a lessee of a vehicle when the vehicle is operated under a lease
 12 agreement.

13 (5) 'Proof of minimum insurance coverage' means the receipt from an insurer by the
 14 department of notice of such insurance coverage by electronic transmission or other
 15 means approved by the department.

16 (6) 'Terminate' or 'termination' means actual cessation of insurance coverage after the
 17 date upon which coverage will not be restored for any reason, including without
 18 limitation cancellation, nonrenewal, and nonpayment of premium and without regard to
 19 whether such cessation was preceded by any extension or grace period allowed by the
 20 insurer.

21 (b)(1)(A) For purposes of aiding in the enforcement of the requirement of minimum
 22 motor vehicle liability insurance, any insurer issuing or renewing in this state any
 23 policy of motor vehicle liability insurance required by Chapter 34 of Title 33 other than
 24 a commercially insured vehicle policy shall within 30 days after the date the insurance
 25 agent binds the coverage or on the date such coverage was renewed, whichever is
 26 applicable, provide notice of such insurance coverage by electronic transmission to the
 27 department; except that once coverage data has been electronically transmitted to the
 28 department, there shall be no requirement to report on subsequent renewals of that
 29 coverage. Insurance coverage information included in such notice of issue or renewal
 30 shall be limited exclusively to the name of the insurer, the vehicle identification
 31 number, the make and year of the insured motor vehicle, and the policy effective date.
 32 The department shall not require the policy limits to be disclosed for purposes of this
 33 subparagraph. For the purposes of this Code section, the vehicle identification number
 34 shall be the vehicle identification number as that number is shown in the records of the
 35 department. For the purposes of this Code section, the Commissioner of Insurance shall
 36 furnish such notices to the department upon issuance of a certificate of self-insurance.

1 (B) In cases in which the minimum motor vehicle insurance coverage required by
2 Chapter 34 of Title 33 terminates, the insurer shall by electronic transmission notify the
3 department of such coverage termination on or before the date coverage ends or, if
4 termination is at the request of the insured, then on the date such request is processed
5 by the insurer. Insurance coverage termination information included in such notice
6 shall include vehicle identification number and the date of coverage termination. For
7 the purposes of this Code section, the Commissioner of Insurance shall furnish such
8 notices to the department upon termination of a certificate of self-insurance.

9 (C) The commissioner shall notify the Commissioner of Insurance quarterly of any and
10 all violations of the notice requirements of this paragraph by any insurer, and the
11 Commissioner of Insurance may take appropriate action against such insurer the same
12 as is authorized by Code Section 33-2-24 for violations of Title 33; provided, however,
13 that there shall be no private cause of action against an insurer or the department for
14 civil damages for providing information, failing to provide information, or erroneously
15 providing information pursuant to this Code section. No insurer shall utilize the costs
16 of any audit or examination conducted by the Insurance Department pursuant to this
17 paragraph as a cost of business in the insurer's rate base.

18 (D) The reports required of insurers and the Commissioner of Insurance shall not apply
19 to any vehicle for which the vehicle coverage is provided by a commercially insured
20 vehicle policy.

21 (2) The department shall prescribe the form and manner of electronic transmission for
22 the purposes of insurers sending the notices required by this Code section which shall in
23 no way be construed as modifying the provisions of Code Section 33-24-45.

24 (3) Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) of this subsection, any irregularities
25 in the notice to the department required by paragraph (1) of this subsection shall not
26 invalidate an otherwise valid termination.

27 (4) The minimum liability insurance records which the department is required to
28 maintain under this Code section or any other provision are exempt from the provisions
29 of any law of this state requiring that such records be open for public inspection;
30 provided, however, that the records of any particular motor vehicle may be available for
31 inspection by any law enforcement officer for official law enforcement investigations, the
32 insurer of record, and the owner of the vehicle in the manner prescribed by the
33 commissioner.

34 (c)(1) The department shall monitor the reporting of the issuance of new and renewal
35 policies and termination of coverage by insurers.

36 (2) A match is based upon the vehicle identification number as recorded on the
37 department's motor vehicle records. When the vehicle identification number does not

1 match the department's motor vehicle records, the department shall notify the insurer and
 2 the insurer shall, within 30 days from receipt of the returned error, correct the vehicle
 3 identification number and resubmit the transaction. After receipt of the department's
 4 notice, if the insurer determines that the vehicle identification number that it submitted
 5 to the department is in fact the accurate number on the insured vehicle, then the insurer
 6 shall so notify the department and the owner of the vehicle, whereupon the owner shall,
 7 in accordance with department procedures, obtain a correction of such number at the
 8 appropriate county tag office.

9 ~~(b)~~(d)(1) After receipt of notification of coverage termination, if the department does not,
 10 on or before the effective date of such termination, receive notice from an insurer that
 11 new minimum motor vehicle insurance coverage for such motor vehicle has been issued,
 12 the department shall send a notice to the owner of the motor vehicle stating that the
 13 department has been informed of the fact of the coverage termination and informing the
 14 owner of the penalties provided by law. The department shall send such notice to the
 15 address of the owner of the motor vehicle shown on the records of the department. The
 16 mailing of such notice by the department to the address of the owner of the motor vehicle
 17 as shown on the records of the department shall be deemed conclusively to be notice to
 18 such owner of such owner's duty to maintain the required minimum insurance coverage
 19 and the possible penalties and consequences for failing to do so and shall be deemed to
 20 satisfy all notice requirements of law and no further notice to the owner shall be required
 21 for the suspensions and revocations provided for in this Code section.

22 (2) It shall be the duty of the owner of such motor vehicle to obtain minimum motor
 23 vehicle insurance coverage and it shall be the duty of the owner's insurer to provide proof
 24 of such coverage to the department within 30 days of the date of such notice, pursuant to
 25 the requirements of subparagraph (b)(1)(A) of ~~Code Section 40-5-71~~ this Code section.
 26 If the vehicle is covered by a ~~fleet~~ commercially insured vehicle policy, the owner's
 27 insurer shall not be required to provide such proof to the department by electronic means.

28 ~~(c)~~(e)(1) When proof of minimum motor vehicle insurance coverage is provided within
 29 the time period specified in this Code section, but there has been a lapse of coverage for
 30 a period of more than ten days, the owner shall remit a \$25.00 lapse fee to the
 31 department. Failure to remit the lapse fee to the department within 30 days of the date
 32 on which the notification was mailed by the department will result in the suspension of
 33 the owner's motor vehicle registration by operation of law as if the proof had not been
 34 provided in a timely manner as provided in paragraph (2) of this subsection. If any lapse
 35 fee provided for in this Code section is paid to the county tax commissioner, the county
 36 shall retain \$5.00 thereof as a collection fee.

1 (2) If proof is not provided within the time period specified in this Code section that
 2 minimum motor vehicle insurance coverage is in effect, the owner's motor vehicle
 3 registration shall be suspended immediately by operation of law by the department.
 4 When such proof is provided and the owner pays a \$25.00 lapse fee and pays a \$60.00
 5 restoration fee, the suspension shall terminate; provided, however, that the commissioner
 6 may waive the lapse fee and restoration fee for any owner whose vehicle registration has
 7 been suspended pursuant to this paragraph who provides proof of continuous minimum
 8 motor vehicle insurance coverage. If any restoration fee provided for in this Code section
 9 is paid to the county tax commissioner, the county shall retain \$10.00 thereof as a
 10 collection fee.

11 (3) In the event of a second suspension of the owner's registration under this Code
 12 section on or after December 1, 2003, during any five-year period, the department by
 13 operation of law shall suspend the motor vehicle registration for a period of 90 days.
 14 After the 90 day suspension period and when proof is provided that minimum motor
 15 vehicle insurance coverage is in effect and the owner pays a \$25.00 lapse fee and pays
 16 a \$60.00 restoration fee, the suspension shall terminate.

17 (4) In the event of a third or subsequent suspension of the owner's registration under this
 18 Code section on or after December 1, 2003, during any five-year period, the department
 19 by operation of law shall revoke the motor vehicle registration and no new application
 20 for registration shall be accepted for a period of six months after such revocation. After
 21 six months from the date of revocation and when proof is provided that minimum motor
 22 vehicle insurance coverage is in effect and the owner pays a \$25.00 lapse fee and pays
 23 a \$160.00 restoration fee, the owner may apply for registration of the motor vehicle.

24 ~~(d)~~(f)(1) The commissioner may waive the lapse fee for any owner whose vehicle
 25 registration has been voluntarily canceled pursuant to Code Section 40-2-10.

26 (2) Upon being presented with a copy of official orders or other satisfactory proof of
 27 ordered duty as approved by rule or regulation of the commissioner showing that an
 28 owner of a motor vehicle was deployed outside the continental United States on active
 29 military duty in the armed forces of the United States at the time his or her minimum
 30 motor vehicle insurance coverage for such vehicle terminated, the county tag agent shall
 31 waive the lapse fee and restoration fee, suspension of the owner's motor vehicle
 32 registration under this Code section shall terminate, and application for registration of the
 33 vehicle which otherwise satisfies requirements provided by law may be accepted without
 34 delay.

35 (3) Notwithstanding any provision in this Code section to the contrary, the commissioner
 36 may temporarily waive or suspend fees, penalties, and notices under this Code section to
 37 any or all owners of motor vehicles as may be necessary in the commissioner's discretion

1 to effectuate changes and improvements to the management of the department's records
 2 and electronic data.

3 ~~(e)~~(g) The commissioner may promulgate such rules and regulations as are necessary to
 4 implement this Code section.

5 ~~(f)~~(h) The department shall commence suspending motor vehicle registrations as provided
 6 in this Code section on December 1, 2003. The department shall commence requiring
 7 payment of lapse fees and restoration fees as provided in this Code section on January 1,
 8 2004.

9 ~~(g)~~(i) The county tax commissioner shall have the authority to waive a lapse fee if
 10 sufficient proof is provided that no actual lapse in coverage occurred. This proof must be
 11 retained by the county tax commissioner for audit purposes.

12 ~~(h)~~(j) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, a person on active military
 13 duty in the armed forces of the United States whose motor vehicle is registered in this state
 14 and has license plates from this state and who, as a result of his or her military duties or
 15 assignment, is required to reside in another state may meet the requirements for minimum
 16 motor vehicle liability coverage by purchasing such coverage in amounts equal to or
 17 greater than the minimum coverages required by Georgia law and providing proof of such
 18 coverage to the department. In such cases, the motor vehicle shall continue to be registered
 19 and licensed in this state as long as it otherwise meets the requirements of law."

20 SECTION 2.

21 Said title is further amended by revising subparagraph (d)(1)(B) of Code Section 40-2-26,
 22 relating to form and contents of application for registration, as follows:

23 "(B) Information obtained from the records or data base of the department regarding
 24 the owner's insurance coverage which information is derived from notice provided to
 25 the department pursuant to Code Section ~~40-5-71~~ 40-2-137; or"

26 SECTION 3.

27 Said title is further amended by repealing and reserving Code Section 40-5-71, relating to
 28 notice of insurance issuance, renewal, or termination of drivers' licenses.

29 SECTION 4.

30 Said title is further amended by revising subsections (a) and (c) of Code Section 40-5-72,
 31 relating to forwarding of license, tag, and tag registration to the department, as follows:

32 "(a) It is the duty of any person who has his or her driver's license and, where applicable,
 33 license tag and tag registration suspended under the provisions of Code Section 40-5-70

1 or ~~40-5-71~~ 40-2-137 immediately upon suspension and demand of the department to
 2 forward such items to the department."

3 "(c) Unless otherwise provided in this Code section, notice of the effective date of
 4 suspension shall occur when the driver receives actual knowledge or legal notice of the
 5 suspension, whichever occurs first. For the purposes of making any determination relating
 6 to the return of a suspended motor vehicle driver's license and, where applicable, license
 7 tag and tag registration, a period of suspension under Code Section 40-5-70 or ~~40-5-71~~
 8 40-2-137 or this Code section shall begin upon the date of conviction adjudicated by the
 9 court having jurisdiction."

10 SECTION 5.

11 Said title is further amended by revising Code Section 40-6-10, relating to insurance
 12 requirements for operation of motor vehicles generally, as follows:

13 "40-6-10.

14 (a)(1) Until December 31, 2003, the owner or operator of a motor vehicle for which
 15 minimum motor vehicle liability insurance coverage is required under Chapter 34 of Title
 16 33 shall keep proof or evidence of required minimum insurance coverage in the vehicle
 17 at all times during the operation of the vehicle. The owner of a motor vehicle shall
 18 provide to any operator of such vehicle proof or evidence of required minimum insurance
 19 coverage for the purposes of compliance with this subsection.

20 (2) The following shall be acceptable proof of insurance on a temporary basis:

21 (A) If the policy providing such coverage was applied for within the last 30 days, a
 22 current written binder for such coverage for a period not exceeding 30 days from the
 23 date such binder was issued shall be considered satisfactory proof or evidence of
 24 required minimum insurance coverage;

25 (B) If the vehicle is operated under a rental agreement, a duly executed vehicle rental
 26 agreement shall be considered satisfactory proof or evidence of required minimum
 27 insurance coverage; and

28 (C) If the owner acquired ownership of the vehicle within the past 30 days, if the type
 29 of proof described in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph is not applicable but the
 30 vehicle is currently effectively provided with required minimum insurance coverage
 31 under the terms of a policy providing required minimum insurance coverage for another
 32 motor vehicle, then a copy of the insurer's declaration of coverage under the policy
 33 providing such required minimum insurance coverage for such other vehicle shall be
 34 considered satisfactory proof or evidence of required minimum insurance coverage for
 35 the vehicle, but only if accompanied by proof or evidence that the owner acquired
 36 ownership of the vehicle within the past 30 days.

1 (2.1) If the vehicle is insured under a fleet commercially insured vehicle policy as
2 defined in Code Section 40-2-137 providing the required minimum insurance coverage
3 or if the vehicle is engaged in interstate commerce and registered under the provisions of
4 Article 3A of Chapter 2 of this title, the insurance information card issued by the insurer
5 shall be considered satisfactory proof of required minimum insurance coverage for the
6 vehicle.

7 (2.2) If the vehicle is insured under a certificate of self-insurance issued by the
8 Commissioner of Insurance providing the required minimum insurance coverage under
9 which the vehicle owner did not report the vehicle identification number to the
10 Commissioner of Insurance, the insurance information card issued by the Commissioner
11 of Insurance shall be considered satisfactory proof of required minimum insurance
12 coverage for the vehicle, but only if accompanied by a copy of the certificate issued by
13 the Commissioner of Insurance.

14 (3) On and after July 1, 2005, the requirement under this Code section that proof or
15 evidence of minimum liability insurance be maintained in a motor vehicle at all times
16 during the operation of the vehicle shall not apply to the owner or operator of any vehicle
17 for which the records or data base of the Department of Revenue indicates that required
18 minimum insurance coverage is currently effective.

19 (4) Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (7) of this subsection, any person who
20 fails to comply with the requirements of this subsection shall be guilty of a misdemeanor
21 and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine of not less than \$200.00 nor more
22 than \$1,000.00 or imprisonment for not more than 12 months, or both.

23 (5) Every law enforcement officer in this state shall determine if the operator of a motor
24 vehicle subject to the provisions of this Code section has the required minimum insurance
25 coverage every time the law enforcement officer stops the vehicle or requests the
26 presentation of the driver's license of the operator of the vehicle.

27 (6) If a law enforcement officer of this state determines that the owner or operator of a
28 motor vehicle subject to the provisions of this Code section does not have proof or
29 evidence of required minimum insurance coverage, the arresting officer shall issue a
30 uniform traffic citation for operating a motor vehicle without proof of insurance. If the
31 court or arresting officer determines that the operator is not the owner, then a uniform
32 traffic citation may be issued to the owner for authorizing the operation of a motor
33 vehicle without proof of insurance.

34 (7) If the person receiving a citation under this subsection shows to the court having
35 jurisdiction of the case that required minimum insurance coverage was in effect at the
36 time the citation was issued, the court may impose a fine not to exceed \$25.00. The court

1 shall not in this case forward a record of the disposition of the case to the department and
2 the driver's license of such person shall not be suspended.

3 (8)(A) For purposes of this Code section up to and including December 31, 2003, a
4 valid insurance card shall be sufficient proof of insurance for any vehicle.

5 (B) For purposes of this Code section on and after January 1, 2004, a valid insurance
6 card shall be sufficient proof of insurance only for any vehicle covered under a fleet
7 commercially insured vehicle policy as defined in Code Section ~~40-5-71~~ 40-2-137 .

8 The insurance card for a fleet commercially insured vehicle policy shall contain at least
9 the name of the insurer, policy number, policy issue or effective date, policy expiration
10 date, and the name of the insured and may, but shall not be required to, include the year,
11 make, model, and vehicle identification number of the vehicle insured.

12 (C) For any vehicle covered under a policy of motor vehicle liability insurance that is
13 not a fleet commercially insured vehicle policy as defined in Code Section ~~40-5-71~~
14 40-2-137, the insurer shall issue a policy information card which shall contain at least
15 the name of the insurer, policy number, policy issue or effective date, policy expiration
16 date, name of the insured, and year, make, model, and vehicle identification number of
17 each vehicle insured; and on and after January 1, 2004, the owner or operator of the
18 motor vehicle shall keep such policy information card in the vehicle at all times during
19 operation of the vehicle for purposes of Code Section 40-6-273.1, but any such policy
20 information card shall not be sufficient proof of insurance for any purposes of this Code
21 section except as otherwise provided in this Code section.

22 (b) An owner or any other person who knowingly operates or knowingly authorizes
23 another to operate a motor vehicle without effective insurance on such vehicle or without
24 an approved plan of self-insurance shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction
25 thereof, shall be subject to a fine of not less than \$200.00 nor more than \$1,000.00 or
26 imprisonment for not more than 12 months, or both. An operator of a motor vehicle shall
27 not be guilty of a violation of this Code section if such operator maintains a policy of motor
28 vehicle insurance which extends coverage to any vehicle the operator may drive. An owner
29 or operator of a motor vehicle shall not be issued a citation by a law enforcement officer
30 for a violation of this Code section if the sole basis for issuance of such a citation is that
31 the law enforcement officer is unable to obtain insurance coverage information from the
32 records of the department.

33 (c) Any person who knowingly makes a false statement or certification under Code
34 Section ~~40-5-71~~ 40-2-137 or this Code section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon
35 conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine of not less than \$200.00 nor more than
36 \$1,000.00 or imprisonment for not more than 12 months, or both.

- 1 (d) Except for vehicles insured under a ~~fleet~~ commercially insured vehicle policy as
2 defined in Code Section 40-2-137 or under a plan of self-insurance approved by the
3 Commissioner of Insurance, insurance coverage information from records of the
4 department shall be prima-facie evidence of the facts stated therein and shall be admissible
5 as evidence in accordance with Code Section 24-3-17 for the purposes of this Code section.
- 6 (e) The minimum liability insurance data base of the department shall be operational for
7 the purposes of testing, evaluation, verification of data, and validation of accuracy not later
8 than November 1, 2002, and shall be fully operational not later than January 1, 2004."

9

SECTION 6.

10 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.