

TITLE 9: VEHICLE CODE
DIVISION 2: REGISTRATION AND LICENSES

§ 2117. Registration: CNMI Active Duty Military Personnel.

(a) *Definition.* For purposes of this section, the term “active duty military personnel” means a person who is on full time duty in active military service in the United States military including the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Army, Air National Guard or active reserve component of the Army, Air Force or Navy.

(b) *Application.* CNMI residents who are active military duty personnel stationed outside of the CNMI in any state or territory of the United States may maintain or renew their vehicle registration in the CNMI, or register new vehicles in the CNMI at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

(c) The active duty military personnel must submit to the Bureau of Motor Vehicle the following requirements along with an application for vehicle registration:

- (1) Proof of active duty status;
- (2) Ownership or title of vehicle;
- (3) Passed inspection of vehicle;
- (4) Current vehicle insurance; and
- (5) Any other vehicle registration requirement of the state or territory in which the active duty military personnel is stationed.

The inspection or vehicle insurance may be obtained from the CNMI or the state or territory where the vehicle is located.

(d) A spouse or legally designated representative on behalf of a qualifying owner who is serving on active duty may register or renew a vehicle under this section.

(e) *Fee.* The fee for the registration or issuance of a vehicle license plate under this section shall not exceed the fee charged for a similar license plate for the same class of vehicle.

(f) *Issuance.* A vehicle license plate shall be issued only to the active duty registered owner of the vehicle, his or her spouse, or legally designated representative.

(1) Registration for a vehicle license plate shall not be limited to one vehicle per active duty military personnel.

(2) Vehicle license plates issued under this section shall not be transferable to any other person.

(3) Vehicle license plates shall be assigned to noncommercial passenger motor vehicles and noncommercial motorcycles.

(g) If the state or territory of residence does not require the basic vehicle registration requirements mentioned listed in subsection (c), the active duty military personnel shall provide the CNMI Bureau of Motor Vehicles with the above-listed vehicle registration requirements as mandated by this Title.

(h) Upon return to the CNMI from active duty, the active duty military personnel shall ensure that his or her vehicle registration is active and valid pursuant to the Commonwealth Vehicle Code.

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Source. PL 18-8 § 2 (May 31, 2013).

Commission Comment: The Commission corrected the spelling of the phrase “Marine Corps” in subsection (a) pursuant to 1 CMC § 3806(g). In addition to severability and savings clauses, PL 18-8 included the following:

Section 1. Findings and Purpose. The Legislature finds that active duty service in the United States military is an admirable undertaking and we, the people of the Commonwealth, are grateful to all citizens who undertake such service. Similarly, the active duty military personnel of the CNMI who are stationed outside the islands in other states or territories are proud representatives of the CNMI, and a reminder to the citizens in the mainland of the contributions of CNMI to homeland security. While away from home on active duty service, however, CNMI military personnel may be homesick and need ties to keep them in touch with home.

The Legislature further finds that in order to provide a sense of nostalgic connection to home and to identify with their island heritage, active duty military personnel serving abroad should be permitted to maintain or renew their vehicle registration, or register their new vehicle(s) at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles upon submission of an application and other required documents. Qualified military personnel are also required to comply with any additional vehicle registration requirement of the state or territory in which they are stationed. This will help make active duty personnel “feel at home while away from home” and help preserve and carry on our cultural heritage. Additionally, the registration of such vehicles fees will be a source of new revenue for the CNMI.

The Legislature finds that many other states permit out-of-state active duty military personnel to operate a vehicle in their state with valid license plates from the individual’s home state or territory, as long as the out-of-state vehicle registration requirements are comparable to the vehicle registration requirements of their state. The Commonwealth Vehicle Code, however, does not present clear direction pertaining to the vehicle registration of active duty military personnel from the CNMI stationed outside the CNMI in other states or territories.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to amend the Commonwealth Vehicle Code to authorize active duty U.S. military personnel to maintain or renew their vehicle registration in the CNMI, or register new vehicles while stationed in any of the states or territories of the United States. Moreover, this Act extends government immunity to injuries caused by inspections or lack thereof from vehicles owned by active duty U.S. military personnel that register their vehicles in the CNMI.