

Department of Fiscal Services
 Maryland General Assembly

FISCAL NOTE

House Bill 1086 (Delegate Wood)
 Commerce and Government Matters

Vehicle Laws - Police Authority - Towing

This bill authorizes a police officer to impound or order the impoundment of a motor vehicle if: (1) the vehicle is impeding traffic; (2) the driver is incapable of operating the vehicle safely and has been charged with a violation of drunk or drugged driving provisions; (3) the driver requires emergency medical assistance and is incapable of operating the vehicle safely due to an accident or other emergency; (4) the vehicle is stolen; or (5) the vehicle or its operation is a threat to public safety.

A police officer who impounds or orders the impoundment of a motor vehicle must notify the driver of the vehicle in writing that it has been impounded and is subject to a lien in favor of the person towing and storing the vehicle. If the driver is not the owner of the vehicle, or is not believed to be capable of understanding the written notice, the last known registered owner must be notified of the impoundment by certified mail.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures could increase by \$7,700 in FY 1997. Future years reflect annualization and inflation.

| (in dollars) | FY 1997 | FY 1998 | FY 1999 | FY 2000 | FY 2001 |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| GF Revenues | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| GF Expenditures | 7,700 | 10,400 | 10,700 | 10,900 | 11,100 |
| Net Effect | (\$7,700) | (\$10,400) | (\$10,700) | (\$10,900) | (\$11,100) |

Note: () - decrease; GF - general funds; FF - federal funds; SF - special funds

Local Effect: Minimal (see below).

Fiscal Analysis

State Expenditures: The Department of State Police reports that this bill would require a notification by certified mail for approximately 3,600 vehicles annually. Currently, the department notifies owners of vehicles stored or impounded by telephone. Given the October 1, 1996 effective date of the bill, the additional cost of providing this notification by certified mail, return receipt requested, in fiscal 1997 would be \$7,680.

The Department of State Police also believes that this bill would require an additional two Trooper First Class positions (\$168,028) or overtime pay to current troopers at a rate of \$26.52 per hour (\$79,401). However, Fiscal Services assumes that the additional workload required by this bill involves mainly providing notifications by mail rather than by telephone. The exchange in work time to perform these tasks does not represent such a substantial increase in costs as suggested by the State Police. Accordingly, Fiscal Services advises that the only increases in expenditures arising from this bill are represented by the increase in postage costs cited above.

Local Expenditures: A limited survey of local jurisdictions indicates that this bill would have minimal, if any, fiscal impact.

The exception in the survey was Prince George's County which advised that this bill would: (1) increase the number of vehicles with liens; (2) require additional research to ascertain lienholders; and (3) add to the number of attendant notifications and their costs. Although the county has not provided an indication of how large an increase in workload and/or notifications this bill could cause, the county has advised that they would need to hire an Administrative Officer (\$42,367) to handle these duties. However, Fiscal Services is unable to verify the need for these additional expenditures at this time.

Information Source(s): Anne Arundel County, Dorchester County, Garrett County, Prince George's County, Wicomico County, Department of State Police, Department of Fiscal Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 12, 1996

ncs

Analysis by: Guy Cherry
Reviewed by: John Rixey

Direct Inquiries to:
John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst
(410) 841-3710
(301) 858-3710