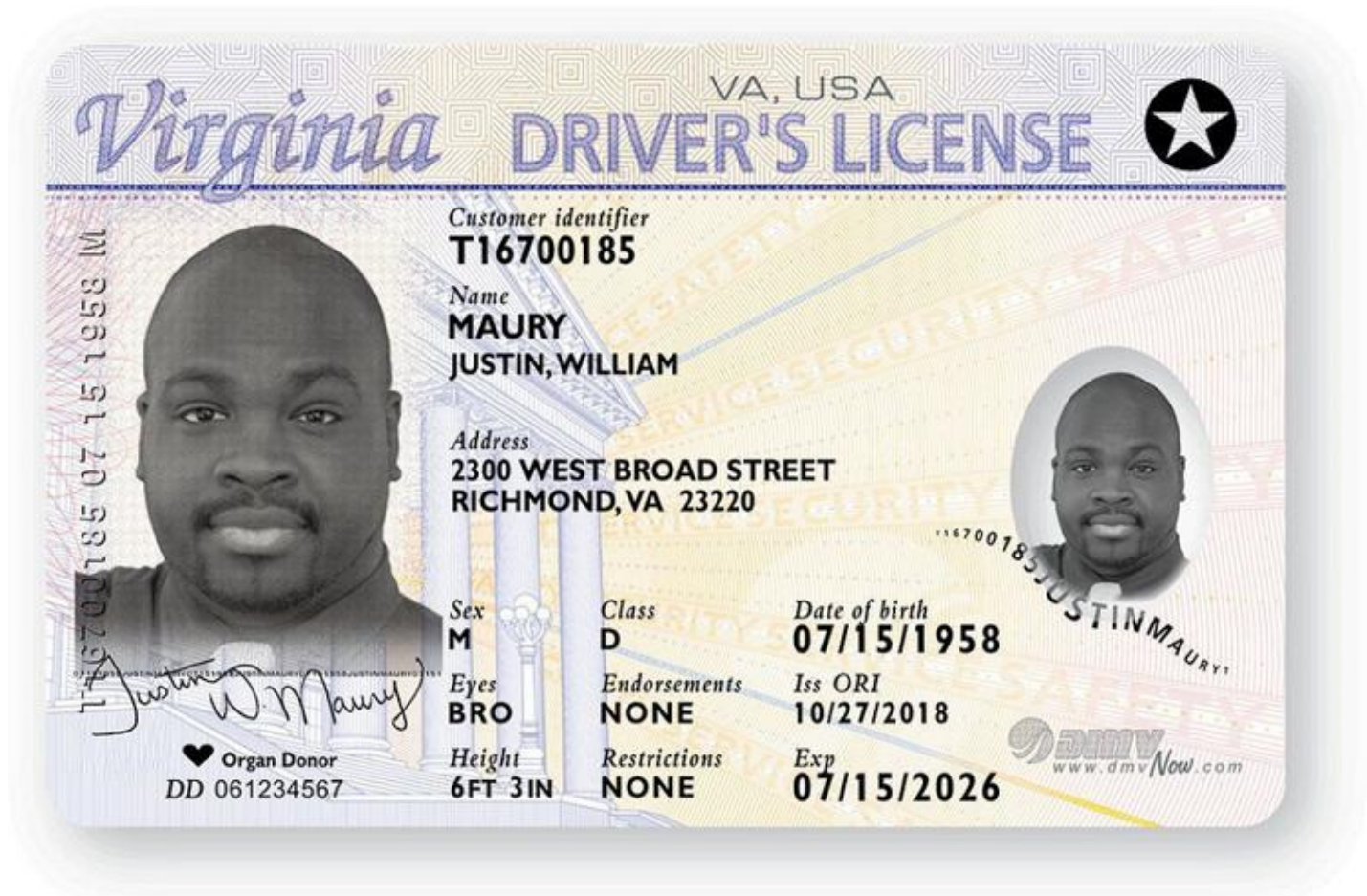


[https://www.fauquier.com/news/driver-s-licenses-restored-to-nearly-virginians-since-new-law/article\\_c32b8a66-af94-11e9-bd40-a3d3a42f6b90.html](https://www.fauquier.com/news/driver-s-licenses-restored-to-nearly-virginians-since-new-law/article_c32b8a66-af94-11e9-bd40-a3d3a42f6b90.html)

## Driver's licenses restored to nearly 35,000 Virginians since new law went into effect July 1

By Daniel Berti Times Staff Writer Jul 26, 2019 Updated Jul 26, 2019



This sample driver's license image was provided by the DMV.

At least 34,545 Virginians have had their driver's licenses reinstated since July 1 as a result of a new law that prohibits state courts from suspending driving privileges solely for unpaid court fines and costs, according to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles.

On Monday, July 22, Gov. Ralph Northam stopped in Dumfries to help spread the word about the new law, which state officials say affects more than 600,000 people across the state, including about 13,000 residents of Prince William and Fauquier counties and the cities of Manassas and Manassas Park whose licenses were previously suspended because of unpaid court fines and fees.

Speaking at First Mount Zion Baptist Church, Northam (D) said the change is an important step to address inequities in the state's criminal justice system because driver's license suspensions for court fees disproportionately "affect people with lower socio-economic status."



Gov. Ralph Northam (D) during a stop at First Mount Zion Baptist Church in Dumfries on Monday, July 22.

By Daniel Berti

Ending the practice is a "win-win" in Virginia because many people impacted by the law were unable to find employment without a driver's license or reliable mode of transportation. The new law would help those individuals get back to work, Northam said.

"It's not only good for them, it's also good for our economy in Virginia. If people aren't working, then our economy is not doing as well as it could be," he said.

In April, Northam amended the state budget to add \$9 million to pay individuals' unpaid court fees and fines. The amendment passed in the state legislature with bi-partisan support after being voted down earlier in the session by a Republican-led committee in the House of Delegates.

Drivers who had their license suspended for unpaid court fines were required to pay a \$145 reinstatement fee, of which \$100 went to the Trauma Center Fund and \$45 went to the Department of Motor Vehicles. Under the new law, only drivers whose licenses are suspended for reasons other than unpaid court fees and fines are required to pay the fee.

Of those who've had their driving privileges restored this month, 31,756 had their licenses suspended for fines and costs, while 2,789 had suspensions for fines, costs and additional reasons, according to DMV spokeswoman Brandy Brubaker.

The DMV could not provide the numbers of local drivers who have had their licenses reinstated so far, however, because that information is not yet available, Brubaker said in an email.

An impact statement conducted by the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget said 57,589 drivers with approximately 80,000 orders of suspension paid the \$145 reinstatement fee to the DMV in 2017.

