

Date of Hearing: April 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Lori D. Wilson, Chair
AB 2719 (Petrie-Norris) – As Amended March 16, 2026

SUBJECT: Vehicles: certificates of title

SUMMARY: Defines “title”, “certificate of title” or “certificate of ownership” to mean an official record, whether in paper or electronic form, establishing and providing proof of legal ownership of a vehicle.

EXISTING LAW:

Authorizes the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), upon registering a vehicle, to issue a certificate of ownership to the legal owner and a registration card to the owner. (Vehicle Code section 4450).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: According to DMV, a California certificate of title is an official source of information about a vehicle. A title may include registered owner’s name and address, vehicle identification information, including vehicle identification number (VIN), make, model, and year; odometer mileage, registration date, lienholder’s name and information (if there is money owed on the vehicle), title brands, and value. Any time a vehicle or vessel is bought or sold, or there is any change to the registered owner or lienholder, the certificate of title needs to be transferred to the new owner.

Vehicle titles make it difficult, though not impossible, for stolen vehicles to be sold on the market. According to the California Highway Patrol, in 2024 176,230 vehicles were stolen at an estimated total value of \$1.56 billion. 84.6% of stolen vehicles were successfully recovered.

The National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (NMVTIS) allows titling agencies to instantly and reliably verify the information on paper title against the electronic data from the state that issued the title. NMVTIS protects consumers from fraud and unsafe vehicles and prevents the resale of stolen vehicles. NMVTIS also assists states and law enforcement in deterring and preventing title fraud and other crimes. Consumers can use NMVTIS to access important vehicle history information.

DMV currently only issues paper registrations to title holders. However, the Electronic Lien and Titling (ELT) Program maintains lienholders’ title information in an electronic format instead of paper titles to reduce handling, storage and mailing costs. Roughly 20 states have ELT programs. While lienholders can gain access to an electronic car title, non-lienholders cannot.

According to the author. "California has long led the nation in digital innovation, and our laws should reflect that leadership. Today, the vast majority of vehicle title transactions in the state already occur electronically, yet the Vehicle Code remains anchored in a paper-based framework that no longer reflects how business is actually conducted. The result is an unnecessary burden on dealers and consumers, who are forced to maintain costly, redundant paper workflows alongside the modern digital systems they rely on every day. AB 2719 fixes that with a

straightforward update, clarifying that a vehicle title is equally valid whether in paper or electronic form. This modernization will streamline transactions, reduce fraud risk, eliminate duplicative administrative costs, and bring California's titling framework in line with the modern digital economy."

California New Car Dealer Association, writing in support of this bill, argues "The practical costs of this statutory gap fall directly on dealers and their customers. Paper-dependent processes create delays in transactions that consumers expect to complete quickly. They increase administrative overhead and compliance risk for dealerships that must track and store physical documents alongside electronic records. They expose both dealers and consumers to the very real risks of lost, stolen, or forged paper titles, risks that electronic systems with strong authentication and audit trails are specifically designed to prevent.

This is not a question of readiness. California has the operational capacity to support electronic titles at scale. The problem is purely statutory, and AB 2719 addresses it with a narrow, technical update, clarifying that a vehicle title may exist in either paper or electronic form, and that both are equally valid and enforceable records of ownership."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California New Car Dealers Association
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Opposition

None on file

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