
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

SB 1218 (Arreguín) - Refusal of registration: illegal dumping violation penalties

Version: February 19, 2026
Urgency: No
Hearing Date: April 27, 2026

Policy Vote: TRANS. 12 - 0
Mandate: No
Consultant: Mark McKenzie

Bill Summary: SB 1218 would require the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to refuse to renew a vehicle registration if the registered owner or lessee has unpaid illegal dumping penalties, as specified.

Fiscal Impact:

- The DMV would incur unknown one-time costs, likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars, to make necessary IT programming changes to create a new vehicle registration hold for unpaid illegal dumping violation penalties and fees. DMV is currently unable to provide a precise cost estimate because implementation efforts would overlap with the rollout of current IT modernization efforts. See Staff Comments. (Motor Vehicle Account)
- The DMV may also incur ongoing likely minor to moderate administrative costs. While the department would charge an administrative service fee to reporting jurisdictions to recover the costs of placing vehicle registration holds, it may also have additional unfunded staffing costs to address customer complaints, depending on the volume of violations reported. (Motor Vehicle Account)

Background: Existing law authorizes an agency that processes notices of parking violations and delinquent parking violations, after completing specified collection efforts, to file an itemized list of unpaid parking penalties and service fees with the DMV for collection when a vehicle owner attempts to register his or her vehicle. Existing law requires DMV, after receiving an itemized list of a person's unpaid parking penalties and fees, to refuse to renew his or her vehicle registration until all outstanding penalties and fees are paid. After collecting payments for unpaid parking penalties and fees, DMV forwards the revenues to the local jurisdictions that filed the itemized list of unpaid tickets, after deducting its administrative costs. Existing law prohibits a processing agency from referring an itemized list of unpaid tickets to DMV to collect on delinquent amounts unless a payment plan is provided for indigent persons, as specified. Existing law also specifies a similar process for the collection of unpaid toll violations through a vehicle registration hold.

Existing law (Penal Code Section 374.3) makes it unlawful and punishable as an infraction to dump or cause to be dumped waste matter in or upon a public or private highway or road, upon private property without the consent of the owner, or in or upon a public park or other public property. Existing law imposes the following penalties for convictions for illegal dumping:

- For non-commercial quantities of waste, a mandatory fine of \$250 - \$1,000 for a first conviction, a mandatory fine of \$500 - \$1,500 for a second conviction, and a

mandatory fine of \$750 - \$3,000 for a third and subsequent conviction. These fines would be doubled if the waste matter was used tires.

- For commercial quantities of waste (one cubic yard or more, as specified), violations are a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for up to six months and the following mandatory fines: \$1,000 - \$3,000 for a first conviction, \$3,000 - \$6,000 for a second conviction, and \$6,000 - \$10,000 for a third and subsequent conviction.
- For a person who is the owner or operator of a business involved in illegal dumping that employs more than 10 full-time employees, the fine would be \$1,000 - \$5,000 for a first conviction, \$3,000 - \$10,000 for a second conviction, and \$6,000 to \$20,000 for a third and subsequent conviction.

When setting fines for convictions, existing law requires the court to consider the defendant's ability to pay, including consideration of the defendant's present financial position, their reasonably discernable future financial position, the likelihood that the defendant will be able to obtain employment within one year of the hearing, and any other factor that may impact the defendant's financial capacity to pay the fine.

Illegal dumping is the unauthorized disposal of solid waste matter such as mattresses, tires, appliances, or construction debris, on public or private property. It is often done to avoid the inconvenience and costs associated with taking trash, especially large, bulky items, to proper waste disposal sites. Illegal dumping ranges from individuals leaving unwanted furniture on the sidewalk, to businesses dumping large quantities of waste matter on the outskirts of town, to contractors leaving unwanted or unused construction materials near worksites. Regardless of the source, the effects of dumping are costly, generating significant social, environmental, and economic impacts. Illegal dumping contributes to a sense that an area is deteriorating, often prompting concerns from business owners and residents about increases in other forms of crime in the area. Dumped materials also block properties or roadways, contaminate the local environment, and contribute to general pollution in the area. Furthermore, many of these effects are felt disproportionately by low-income communities and communities of color. Effects are also not relegated to any single part of California, as illegal dumping is a persistent problem in urban, suburban, and rural communities. As a result, local governments and private property owners across the state spend millions of dollars annually to clean up illegal dump sites.

Beyond state law, many local jurisdictions have adopted ordinances to address illegal dumping. Most often these simply implement state law, but some provide for additional punishments including further administrative or clean-up fees, or the seizure of vehicles involved in repeat offenses. Despite these efforts, the problems related to illegal dumping persist.

Proposed Law: SB 1218 would require DMV to refuse to renew a vehicle registration if the registered owner or lessee has unpaid illegal dumping penalties. Specifically, this bill would:

- Require DMV to refuse to renew the registration of a vehicle if the registered owner or lessee has been mailed a notice of delinquent illegal dumping violation related to a specified Penal Code violation, the court has sent DMV an itemization of unpaid illegal dumping penalties, including administrative fees, and the owner or lessee has not paid the penalties and fees.

- Authorize the vehicle owner or lessee to renew their registration if they pay the full amount of all outstanding illegal dumping penalties and fees at the time of application for renewal.
- Require DMV to issue a receipt showing each penalty and fee that has been paid, the court for that penalty ad fee, and a description of the vehicle.
- Require the court to issue an abstract or notice of disposition of the illegal dumping violation to the renter or lessor of a vehicle issued a notice of delinquent illegal dumping violation if the person provides information to the court showing that a rentee or lessee was operating the vehicle when the violation was issued.
- Prohibit DMV from refusing to renew the registration of a vehicle owned by a renter or lessor if they provide DMV with a notice of disposition of the illegal dumping violations, as specified.
- Prohibit DMV from refusing to renew the registration of a vehicle if the illegal dumping violation citation was issued prior to the registered owner taking possession of the vehicle.
- Require DMV to allow a registered owner or lessee to file a certification of planned non-operation if the person currently owes illegal dumping penalties and fees for that vehicle, regardless of whether they are on an active payment plan.

Related Legislation: SB 1230 (Valladares), which is currently pending in this Committee, would increase the fines for all illegal dumping penalties and require the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery to establish a website with resources to help cities and counties combat, prevent, and clean up illegal dumping as specified.

Staff Comments: The DMV indicates that it would not be able to complete the necessary automation workload in advance of the bill's January 1, 2027 operative date given its current modernization priorities. Specifically, the vehicle registration component of the Digital eXperience Platform Project (DXP) is expected to be ready for rollout in the fall of 2026 and there would be insufficient time before this bill's effective date to complete necessary programming to allow for vehicle registration holds related to unpaid illegal dumping penalties. As noted above, DMV is unable to predict the costs of this effort given the overlap in timeframes with the systems rollout, and this project is not within the scope of the DXP.

The Motor Vehicle Account (MVA) is the primary funding source for the California Highway Patrol and DMV. The MVA has had a structural deficit since the 2021-22 fiscal year, with expenditures exceeding revenues by approximately \$60 million in the current year, and approximately \$112 million in the budget year (projected). Absent further actions to address the MVA fund condition, approving any new proposals that increase MVA expenditures would exacerbate the current structural imbalance of the fund. The Budget Summary published for the Governor's proposed 2026-27 Budget notes that "the MVA will be insolvent as soon as 2028-29. Given the ongoing fiscal constraints in the MVA, the Administration will continue to limit new workload or initiatives, including those with delayed implementation dates that would create additional cost pressures over time."