

FOREIGN DRIVER'S LICENSES IN MICHIGAN

WHAT DOES SB 501 MEAN FOR YOU?

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WHAT IS SB 501?¹

SB 501 (Senate Bill 0501) was signed into law on May 26, 2016 and should take effect by late March 2017. The law changes some rules for those in the state of Michigan with a foreign driver's license. Prior to SB 501, only driver's licenses from specific "treaty countries" have been considered valid. When SB 501 takes effect, "treaty" country licenses will still be valid. Any other country's license will also be valid as long as the driver can prove "legal presence"² in the United States. All drivers with foreign licenses that are not in English will need to have a document from their country called an "International Driving Permit" OR, if they can't get that document from their country, a translation that has similar information.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET PULLED OVER?

If you are a nonresident and your license is from a "treaty country" (see list on back), and it is in English or you have a translation, you are driving legally in Michigan.

If your license is from a "non-treaty country," you must possess "a valid passport, a valid visa, or other valid documents to verify [your] legal presence in the U.S." and a translation if your license is not in English.

If you are a U.S. citizen or you are legally present and you live in Michigan and intend to keep living in Michigan, you might be required to get a Michigan driver's license. However, if you are not "legally present" you can't be considered a Michigan resident for purposes of the driver's license law; you should not be penalized for not having a Michigan license.

DO I NEED TO HAVE MY FOREIGN LICENSE TRANSLATED?

Yes. If your license is not in English, it needs to be translated, either with an "International Driving Permit" or a similar translation. Anyone fluent in both languages can do the translation, and the Michigan Secretary of State's office maintains a list of possible translators. If your foreign license is in English or has English on the back, you don't need a translation at all. See possible translators here:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/Translators_Resource_List_95124_7.pdf

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR A MICHIGAN DRIVER'S LICENSE?

Michigan law requires proof of U.S. citizenship or "legal presence" in the United States to obtain a Michigan driver's license. SB 501 does not change that. Those who do not have legal immigration status in the United States are not eligible for a Michigan driver's license.

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS AN 'INTERNATIONAL DRIVER'S LICENSE'?

The "International Driver's License" is just supposed to be a translation of a valid foreign license. If you don't have a valid foreign license, then an "International Driver's License" has no value for you. And, if you can't get a formal "International Driving Permit" as a translation of your license from your foreign government, any competent person can do a translation for you in the U.S. There are many "International Driver's License" scams designed to prey upon people who are not eligible for foreign or Michigan licenses. You can learn more here:

www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0050-international-drivers-license-scams

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¹ "SB 501," Public Act No. 138 Public Acts of 2016 Approved by the Governor May 25, 2016 Filed with the Secretary of State May 26, 2016

² MCL 257.51a

TREATY COUNTRIES - LEGAL PRESENCE NOT REQUIRED TO USE FOREIGN LICENSE IN MI:

Albania | Algeria | Argentina | Australia | Austria | Bahamas | Bangladesh | Barbados | Belgium | Belize | Benin | Botswana | Brazil | Bulgaria | Burkina Faso | Cambodia | Canada | Central African Rep. | Chile | China (Taiwan) | Colombia | Congo | Congo Democratic Rep. | Costa Rica | Cote d'Ivoire | Cuba | Cyprus | Czech Rep. | Denmark | Dominican Republic | Ecuador | Egypt | El Salvador | Fiji | Finland | France | Gambia | Georgia | Germany | Ghana | Greece | Grenada | Guatemala | Guyana | Haiti | Honduras | Hong Kong | Hungary | Iceland | India | Ireland | Israel | Italy | Jamaica | Japan | Jordan | Korea | Kyrgyz Rep. | Laos | Lebanon | Lesotho | Luxembourg | Macao | Madagascar | Malawi | Malaysia | Mali | Malta | Mauritius | Mexico | Monaco | Morocco | Namibia | Nicaragua | Netherlands | New Zealand | Niger | Nigeria | Norway | Panama | Papua New Guinea | Paraguay | Peru | Philippines | Poland | Portugal | Romania | Russian Federation | Rwanda | St. Lucia | St. Vincent & the Grenadines | San Marino | Senegal | Serbia and Montenegro | Seychelles | Sierra Leone | Singapore | Slovak Rep. | South Africa | Spain | Sri Lanka | Suriname | Swaziland | Sweden | Syrian Arab Rep. | Tanzania | Thailand | Togo | Trinidad & Tobago | Tunisia | Turkey | Uganda | United Arab Emirates | United Kingdom | Uruguay | Vatican City | Venezuela | Vietnam Rep. | Western Samoa | Yugoslavia | Zambia | Zimbabwe

NON-TREATY COUNTRIES - LEGAL PRESENCE REQUIRED TO USE FOREIGN LICENSE IN MI:

Afghanistan | Andorra | Angola | Antigua and Barbuda | Armenia | Aruba | Azerbaijan | Bahrain | Belarus | Bhutan | Bolivia | Bosnia and Herzegovina | Brunei | Burma | Burundi | Cameroon | Cape Verde | Chad | China | Comoros | Croatia | Curacao | Djibouti | Dominica | East Timor (see Timor-Leste) | Equatorial Guinea | Eritrea | Estonia | Ethiopia | Gabon | Guinea | Guinea-Bissau | Holy See | Indonesia | Iran | Iraq | Kazakhstan | Kenya | Kiribati | Kosovo | Kuwait | Latvia | Liberia | Libya | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Macedonia | Maldives | Marshall Islands | Mauritania | Micronesia Moldova | Mongolia | Mozambique | Nauru | Nepal | Oman | Pakistan | Palau | Palestinian Territories | Qatar | Saint Kitts and Nevis | Samoa | Sao Tome Principe | Saudi Arabia | Sint Maarten | Slovenia | Solomon Islands | Somalia | South Sudan | Sudan | Switzerland | Tajikistan | Timor-Leste | Tonga | Turkmenistan | Tuvalu | Ukraine | Uzbekistan | Vanuatu | Yemen

