

AMENDED IN SENATE JUNE 29, 2009

AMENDED IN SENATE JUNE 3, 2009

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY APRIL 13, 2009

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 12, 2009

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 9, 2009

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009—10 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 14

Introduced by Assembly Member Fuentes

December 1, 2008

An act to repeal and add Section 22659.5 of the Vehicle Code, relating to vehicles.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 14, as amended, Fuentes. Vehicles: nuisance abatement: impoundment.

Existing law authorizes a city, county, or city and county to establish a 5-year pilot program that implements a procedure to declare a motor vehicle to be a public nuisance when the motor vehicle is used in the commission of specified crimes related to prostitution.

This bill would repeal the provisions authorizing the pilot program and would instead authorize a city, county, or city and county to adopt an ordinance declaring a motor vehicle to be a nuisance subject to an impoundment period of up to 30 days when the motor vehicle is involved in the commission of any one or more of specified crimes related to prostitution or illegal dumping of commercial quantities of waste matter upon a public or private highway or road, *if the owner or operator of*

the vehicle has had a prior conviction for the same offense within the past 3 years. The bill would require the ordinance to include specified provisions related to notice, the payment of towing, storage, and administrative fees, the provision of a poststorage hearing, and the release of the impounded vehicle.

This bill would also require the ordinance to provide that a person operating or in charge of a storage facility is civilly liable to the owner of the vehicle or the person who tendered the towing, storage, and related fees for 4 times the amount, not to exceed \$500, if the person operating or in charge of the storage facility fails to comply with specified requirements to accept a valid bank credit card or cash for the payment of those fees.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: no.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 22659.5 of the Vehicle Code is repealed.
2 SEC. 2. Section 22659.5 is added to the Vehicle Code, to read:
3 22659.5. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a city
4 or a county may adopt an ordinance declaring a motor vehicle to
5 be a public nuisance subject to seizure and an impoundment period
6 of up to 30 days when the motor vehicle is used in the commission
7 or attempted commission of an act that violates Section 266h or
8 266i of, subdivision (h) of Section 374.3 of, or subdivision (b) of
9 Section 647 of, the Penal Code, if the owner or operator of the
10 vehicle has had a prior conviction ~~under one of these provisions~~
11 *for the same offense within the past three years.* An ordinance
12 adopted pursuant to this section may incorporate any combination
13 or all of these offenses. The vehicle may only be impounded
14 pursuant to a valid arrest of the driver for a violation of one of
15 these provisions. An ordinance adopted pursuant to this section
16 shall, at a minimum, contain all of the following provisions:
17 (a) Within two working days after impoundment, the
18 impounding agency shall send a notice by certified mail, return
19 receipt requested, to the legal owner of the vehicle, at the address
20 obtained from the department, informing the owner that the vehicle
21 has been impounded. The notice shall also include notice of the
22 opportunity for a poststorage hearing to determine the validity of
23 the storage or to determine mitigating circumstances establishing

1 that the vehicle should be released. The impounding agency shall
2 be prohibited from charging for more than five days' storage if it
3 fails to notify the legal owner within two working days after the
4 impoundment when the legal owner redeems the impounded
5 vehicle. The impounding agency shall maintain a published
6 telephone number that provides information 24 hours a day
7 regarding the impoundment of vehicles and the rights of a legal
8 owner and a registered owner to request a hearing. The notice shall
9 include all of the following information:

10 (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the agency
11 providing the notice.

12 (2) The location of the place of storage and description of the
13 vehicle, that shall include, if available, the model or make, the
14 manufacturer, the license plate number, and the mileage.

15 (3) The authority and purpose for the removal of the vehicle.

16 (4) A statement that, in order to receive a poststorage hearing,
17 the owners, or their agents, shall request the hearing in person,
18 writing, or by telephone within 10 days of the date appearing on
19 the notice.

20 (b) The poststorage hearing shall be conducted within 48 hours
21 of the request, excluding weekends and holidays. The public
22 agency may authorize one of its own officers or employees to
23 conduct the hearing if that hearing officer is not the same person
24 who directed the seizure of the vehicle.

25 (c) Failure of the legal and the registered owners, or their agents,
26 to request or to attend a scheduled hearing shall satisfy the
27 poststorage hearing requirement.

28 (d) The agency employing the person who directed the storage
29 shall be responsible for the costs incurred for towing and storage
30 if it is determined in the poststorage hearing that reasonable
31 grounds for the storage are not established.

32 (e) Any period during which a vehicle is subjected to storage
33 under an ordinance adopted pursuant to this section shall be
34 included as part of the period of impoundment.

35 (f) The impounding agency shall release the vehicle to the
36 registered owner or his or her agent prior to the end of the
37 impoundment period under any of the following circumstances:

38 (1) The driver of the impounded vehicle was arrested without
39 probable cause.

40 (2) The vehicle is a stolen vehicle.

1 (3) The vehicle is subject to bailment and was driven by an
2 unlicensed employee of a business establishment, including a
3 parking service or repair garage.

4 (4) The driver of the vehicle is not the sole registered owner of
5 the vehicle and the vehicle is being released to another registered
6 owner of the vehicle who agrees not to allow the driver to use the
7 vehicle until after the end of the impoundment period.

8 (5) The registered owner of the vehicle was neither the driver
9 nor a passenger of the vehicle at the time of the alleged violation,
10 or was unaware that the driver was using the vehicle to engage in
11 activities subject to Section 266h or 266i of, or subdivision (b) of
12 Section 647 of, the Penal Code.

13 (6) A spouse, registered domestic partner, or other affected third
14 party objects to the impoundment of the vehicle on the grounds
15 that it would create a hardship if the subject vehicle is the sole
16 vehicle in a household. The hearing officer shall release the vehicle
17 where the hardship to a spouse, registered domestic partner, or
18 other affected third party created by the impoundment of the subject
19 vehicle, or the length of the impoundment, outweigh the
20 seriousness and the severity of the act in which the vehicle was
21 used.

22 (g) Notwithstanding any provision of law, if a motor vehicle is
23 released prior to the conclusion of the impoundment period because
24 the driver was arrested without probable cause, neither the arrested
25 person nor the registered owner of the motor vehicle is responsible
26 for towing and storage charges nor shall the motor vehicle be sold
27 to satisfy those charges.

28 (h) Except as provided in subdivision (g), the registered owner
29 or his or her agent shall be responsible for all towing and storage
30 charges related to the impoundment.

31 (i) A vehicle removed and seized under an ordinance adopted
32 pursuant to this section shall be released to the legal owner of the
33 vehicle or the legal owner's agent prior to the end of the
34 impoundment period if both of the following conditions are met:

35 (1) The legal owner is a motor vehicle dealer, bank, credit union,
36 acceptance corporation, or other licensed financial institution
37 legally operating in this state, or is another person who is not the
38 registered owner and holds a security interest in the vehicle.

1 (2) The legal owner or the legal owner's agent pays all towing
2 and storage fees related to the seizure and impoundment of the
3 vehicle.

4 (j) (1) No lien sale processing fees shall be charged to the legal
5 owner who redeems the vehicle prior to the 15th day of the
6 impoundment period. Neither the impounding authority nor any
7 person having possession of the vehicle shall collect from the legal
8 owner as described in paragraph (1) of subdivision (i), or the legal
9 owner's agent, any administrative charges imposed pursuant to
10 Section 22850.5, unless the legal owner voluntarily requested a
11 poststorage hearing.

12 (2) A person operating or in charge of a storage facility where
13 vehicles are stored pursuant to this section shall accept a valid
14 bank credit card or cash for payment of towing, storage, and related
15 fees by a legal or registered owner or the owner's agent claiming
16 the vehicle. A credit card or debit card shall be in the name of the
17 person presenting the card. For purposes of this section, "credit
18 card" is as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 1747.02 of the
19 Civil Code. Credit card does not include a credit card issued by a
20 retail seller.

21 (3) A person operating or in charge of a storage facility
22 described in paragraph (2) who violates paragraph (2) shall be
23 civilly liable to the owner of the vehicle or the person who tendered
24 the fees for four times the amount of the towing, storage, and
25 related fees not to exceed five hundred dollars (\$500).

26 (4) A person operating or in charge of the storage facility
27 described in paragraph (2) shall have sufficient funds on the
28 premises of the primary storage facility during normal business
29 hours to accommodate, and make change for, a reasonable
30 monetary transaction.

31 (5) Credit charges for towing and storage services shall comply
32 with Section 1748.1 of the Civil Code. Law enforcement agencies
33 may include the costs of providing for payment by credit when
34 making agreements with towing companies on rates.

35 (6) A failure by a storage facility to comply with any applicable
36 conditions set forth in this subdivision shall not affect the right of
37 the legal owner or the legal owner's agent to retrieve the vehicle
38 if all conditions required of the legal owner or legal owner's agent
39 under this subdivision are satisfied.

(k) (1) The legal owner or the legal owner's agent shall present to the law enforcement agency, impounding agency, person in possession of the vehicle, or any person acting on behalf of those agencies, a copy of the assignment, as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 7500.1 of the Business and Professions Code, a release from the one responsible governmental agency, only if required by the agency, a government-issued photographic identification card, and any one of the following as determined by the legal owner or the legal owner's agent: a certificate of repossession for the vehicle, a security agreement for the vehicle, or title, whether or not paperless or electronic, showing proof of legal ownership for the vehicle. Any documents presented may be originals, photocopies, or facsimile copies, or may be transmitted electronically. The law enforcement agency, impounding agency, or other governmental agency, or any person acting on behalf of those agencies, shall not require any documents to be notarized. The law enforcement agency, impounding agency, or any person acting on behalf of those agencies may require the agent of the legal owner to produce a photocopy or facsimile copy of its repossession agency license or registration issued pursuant to Chapter 11 (commencing with Section 7500) of Division 3 of the Business and Professions Code, or to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the law enforcement agency, impounding agency, or any person acting on behalf of those agencies that the agent is exempt from licensure pursuant to Section 7500.2 or 7500.3 of the Business and Professions Code.

(2) Administrative costs authorized under subdivision (a) of Section 22850.5 shall not be charged to the legal owner of the type specified in paragraph (1) of subdivision (i) who redeems the vehicle unless the legal owner voluntarily requests a poststorage hearing. A city, county, city and county, or state agency shall not require a legal owner or a legal owner's agent to request a poststorage hearing as a requirement for release of the vehicle to the legal owner or the legal owner's agent. The law enforcement agency, impounding agency, or other governmental agency, or any person acting on behalf of those agencies, shall not require any documents other than those specified in this paragraph. The legal owner or the legal owner's agent shall be given a copy of any documents he or she is required to sign, except for a vehicle evidentiary hold log book. The law enforcement agency,

1 impounding agency, or any person acting on behalf of those
2 agencies, or any person in possession of the vehicle, may
3 photocopy and retain the copies of any documents presented by
4 the legal owner or legal owner's agent. The legal owner shall
5 indemnify and hold harmless a storage facility from any claims
6 arising out of the release of the vehicle to the legal owner or the
7 legal owner's agent and from any damage to the vehicle after its
8 release, including the reasonable costs associated with defending
9 any such claims.

10 (l) A legal owner, who meets the requirements for release of a
11 vehicle pursuant to subdivision (i), or the legal owner's agent, shall
12 not be required to request a poststorage hearing as a requirement
13 for release of the vehicle to the legal owner or the legal owner's
14 agent.

15 (m) (1) A legal owner, who meets the requirements for release
16 of a vehicle pursuant to subdivision (i), or the legal owner's agent,
17 shall not release the vehicle to the registered owner of the vehicle
18 or an agent of the registered owner, unless the registered owner is
19 a rental car agency, until after the termination of the impoundment
20 period.

21 (2) Prior to relinquishing the vehicle, the legal owner may
22 require the registered owner to pay all towing and storage charges
23 related to the seizure and impoundment.

24 (n) (1) A vehicle removed and seized pursuant to an ordinance
25 adopted pursuant to this section shall be released to a rental car
26 agency prior to the end of the impoundment period if the agency
27 is either the legal owner or registered owner of the vehicle and the
28 agency pays all towing and storage fees related to the seizure and
29 impoundment of the vehicle.

30 (2) The owner of a rental vehicle that was seized under an
31 ordinance adopted pursuant to this section may continue to rent
32 the vehicle upon recovery of the vehicle. However, the rental car
33 agency shall not rent another vehicle to the driver of the vehicle
34 that was seized until the impoundment period has expired.

35 (3) The rental car agency may require the person to whom the
36 vehicle was rented to pay all towing and storage charges related
37 to the seizure and impoundment.