

Council OKs temporary ID cards for taxi drivers

■ County requires drivers to pass an FBI background check

On Tuesday, the County Council voted 8-0 to continue issuing 90-day temporary ID cards to taxi drivers who have passed a state background check while they await the results of

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an FBI background check.

Montgomery County is the only Maryland jurisdiction that requires drivers to undergo the FBI check.

The extension was carried over from this summer by Councilmen George L. Leventhal (D-At large) and Thomas E. Perez (D-Dist. 5), both of Takoma Park.

"The goal [of the original legislation] was to increase customer service, and one year later we had a significant drop in the number of drivers," Perez said. "I think this bill comes up with some middle ground."

Cab company owners and drivers had complained about stricter rules passed last year, which resulted in long delays in drivers beginning work and the increased costs for the company owners.

Tuesday's legislation also allows taxi companies to pay for their own third-party background checks if the state check takes more than 10 days.

In other action

•Ex-prisoners given more time to complete release programs: The council voted 8-0 to extend by one year the time former inmates can remain in work release or pre-release programs.

The extension, from six months, allows program administrators to monitor offenders longer in a setting outside a correctional facility. That results in better success rates for

offenders re-entering the workforce, said Councilman Philip M. Andrews (D-Dist. 3) of Gaithersburg, chairman of the Public Safety Committee.

•Contractors may be required to provide more health insurance: A bill introduced Tuesday and sponsored by outgoing Councilman Michael L. Subin would require all county contractors with service contracts valued at more than \$50,000 to provide their employees with the same level of insurance offered to county employees.

Nonprofit organizations would be included. Subin (D-At large) of Gaithersburg was absent and could not answer questions about the requirements. A public hearing is set for Oct. 24.

Council hopeful sues Ehrlich

Energy lawyer and County Council District 1 candidate Roger Berliner (D) filed a lawsuit in a Montgomery Circuit Court on Tuesday to order Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R) to implement the "gas sipper/gas guzzler" law approved by the state legislature in 1992.

Under the law, owners of vehicles consuming large amounts of gasoline face a state surcharge of up to \$250. The same amount would be refunded to owners of vehicles with better mileage rates. The law was never implemented because a state Attorney General's opinion said it could be pre-empted by federal law.

In February, Berliner sent Ehrlich an intent to sue letter if the law was not quickly implemented.

Next on the agenda

On Thursday, the council's Management and Fiscal Policy Committee hears updates on county elections board's plan to fix the problems that disrupted the September primary. The hearing begins at 10:30 a.m. in the Council Office Building at 100 Maryland Ave. in Rockville.



Perez