

# ALASKA LEGISLATURE

## *Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins*

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### **Sponsor Statement | HB 186 – Off-Highway Driver’s Licenses**

House Bill 186 would put eligibility criteria for off-highway Class D (non-commercial) driver’s licenses into statute. Currently, 279 Alaskan communities are already eligible for off-highway restricted licenses, which do not require a photo or a road test, and are exempt from registration and insurance requirements. Off-highway licenses are important to rural residents: they don’t have to travel to communities with DMV offices to be legally licensed to drive.

But current eligibility requirements for off-highway licenses are illogical. The regulation that allows for off-highway licensure (2 AAC 90.220(b)) borrows eligibility criteria from the statutes that establishes vehicle registration exemptions (Sec. 28.10.011). Residents are exempt from vehicle registration if they are unconnected to the highway system, and live in communities with an average daily traffic count of less than 499. That 499 is problematic. Communities are connected to the state highway or they aren’t: their traffic count is irrelevant.

This bill would establish appropriate criteria for off-highway licenses instead of borrowing registration exemption criteria: if communities are off-highway, they qualify for the licenses. This would close the loophole created by the current system, in which communities with no access to DMV offices but traffic counts above 499 cannot qualify for off-highway licenses, despite having the same driving conditions as the other 279 eligible communities. Instead, these residents face prohibitive conditions to receive licenses: they must travel to and stay in communities with DMV office, borrow or rent vehicles, and schedule and take road tests on unfamiliar roads or highways before they can be legally allowed to drive at home.

The bill also adjusts the current insurance and registrations exemptions that go with off-highway licenses to match the new eligibility requirements. Without this corresponding change, drivers newly eligible for off-highway licenses would still be de facto required to obtain an unrestricted driver’s license due to the prohibitive cost of carrying insurance while holding only an off-highway license.

This bill provides rural residence access to legal licensure without prohibitive costs, saving them the time and expense of traveling to DMV offices for services that other Alaskans can get at home.