



Ohio Revised Code Section 4503.03 Deputy registrars.

Effective: October 3, 2023

Legislation: House Bill 33

(A)(1)(a) Except as provided in division (B) of this section, the registrar of motor vehicles may designate one or more of the following persons to act as a deputy registrar in each county:

- (i) The county auditor in any county;
- (ii) The clerk of a court of common pleas in any county;
- (iii) An individual;
- (iv) A nonprofit corporation as defined in division (C) of section 1702.01 of the Revised Code.

All fees collected and retained by a clerk for conducting deputy registrar services shall be paid into the county treasury to the credit of the certificate of title administration fund created under section 325.33 of the Revised Code.

(b) As part of the selection process in awarding a deputy registrar contract, the registrar shall consider the customer service performance record of any person previously awarded a deputy registrar contract pursuant to division (A)(1) of this section.

(2) Deputy registrars shall accept applications for the annual license tax for any vehicle not taxed under section 4503.63 of the Revised Code and shall assign distinctive numbers in the same manner as the registrar. Such deputies shall be located in such locations as the registrar sees fit. Except as provided in division (A)(3) of this section, there shall be at least one deputy registrar in each county.

(3) The registrar need not appoint a deputy registrar in a county to which all of the following apply:

(a) No individual, nonprofit corporation, or, where applicable, clerk of court of common pleas participates in the competitive selection process to be designated as a deputy registrar;



(b) Neither the county auditor nor the clerk of court of common pleas agrees to be designated as a deputy registrar;

(c) No individual or nonprofit corporation agrees to be designated as a deputy registrar;

(d) No deputy registrar operating an existing deputy registrar agency in another county agrees to be designated as the deputy registrar for that county.

(4) The registrar may reestablish a deputy registrar in any county without a deputy registrar if any of the following apply:

(a) The county auditor requests to be designated as a deputy registrar;

(b) The clerk of court of common pleas requests to be designated as a deputy registrar;

(c) A deputy registrar operating an existing deputy registrar agency in another county requests to be designated as a deputy registrar for that county;

(d) A qualified individual or nonprofit corporation requests to be designated as a deputy registrar. In the event that two or more qualified individuals, nonprofit corporations, or a combination thereof, request to be designated as a deputy registrar, the registrar may make the designation through the competitive selection process.

Deputy registrar contracts are subject to the provisions of division (B) of section 125.081 of the Revised Code.

(B)(1) The registrar shall not designate any person to act as a deputy registrar under division (A)(1) of this section if the person or, where applicable, the person's spouse or a member of the person's immediate family has made, within the current calendar year or any one of the previous three calendar years, one or more contributions totaling in excess of one hundred dollars to any person or entity included in division (A)(2) of section 4503.033 of the Revised Code. As used in this division, "immediate family" has the same meaning as in division (D) of section 102.01 of the Revised Code,



and "entity" includes any political party and any "continuing association" as defined in division (C)(4) of section 3517.01 of the Revised Code or "political action committee" as defined in division (C)(8) of that section that is primarily associated with that political party. For purposes of this division, contributions to any continuing association or any political action committee that is primarily associated with a political party shall be aggregated with contributions to that political party.

The contribution limitations contained in this division do not apply to any county auditor or clerk of a court of common pleas. A county auditor or clerk of a court of common pleas is not required to file the disclosure statement or pay the filing fee required under section 4503.033 of the Revised Code. The limitations of this division also do not apply to a deputy registrar who, subsequent to being awarded a deputy registrar contract, is elected to an office of a political subdivision.

(2) The registrar shall not designate either of the following to act as a deputy registrar:

(a) Any elected public official other than a county auditor or, as authorized by division (A)(1) of this section, a clerk of a court of common pleas, acting in an official capacity, except that, the registrar shall continue and may renew a contract with any deputy registrar who, subsequent to being awarded a deputy registrar contract, is elected to an office of a political subdivision;

(b) Any person holding a current, valid contract to conduct motor vehicle inspections under section 3704.14 of the Revised Code.

(3) As used in division (B) of this section, "political subdivision" has the same meaning as in section 3501.01 of the Revised Code.

(C)(1) Except as provided in division (C)(2) of this section, deputy registrars are independent contractors and neither they nor their employees are employees of this state, except that nothing in this section shall affect the status of county auditors or clerks of courts of common pleas as public officials, nor the status of their employees as employees of any of the counties of this state, which are political subdivisions of this state. Each deputy registrar shall be responsible for the payment of all unemployment compensation premiums, all workers' compensation premiums, social security contributions, and any and all taxes for which the deputy registrar is legally responsible. Each deputy



registrar shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws requiring the withholding of income taxes or other taxes from the compensation of the deputy registrar's employees. Each deputy registrar shall maintain during the entire term of the deputy registrar's contract a policy of business liability insurance satisfactory to the registrar and shall hold the department of public safety, the director of public safety, the bureau of motor vehicles, and the registrar harmless upon any and all claims for damages arising out of the operation of the deputy registrar agency.

(2) For purposes of Chapter 4141. of the Revised Code, determinations concerning the employment of deputy registrars and their employees shall be made under Chapter 4141. of the Revised Code.

(D)(1) With the approval of the director, the registrar shall adopt rules governing deputy registrars. The rules shall do all of the following:

(a) Establish requirements governing the terms of the contract between the registrar and each deputy registrar and the services to be performed;

(b) Establish requirements governing the amount of bond to be given as provided in this section;

(c) Establish requirements governing the size and location of the deputy's office;

(d) Establish requirements governing the leasing of equipment necessary to conduct the vision screenings required under section 4507.12 of the Revised Code and training in the use of the equipment;

(e) Encourage every deputy registrar to inform the public of the location of the deputy registrar's office and hours of operation by means of public service announcements;

(f) Allow any deputy registrar to advertise in regard to the operation of the deputy registrar's office, including allowing nonprofit corporations operating as a deputy registrar to advertise that a specified amount of proceeds collected by the nonprofit corporation are directed to a specified charitable organization or philanthropic cause;

(g) Specify the hours the deputy's office is to be open to the public and require as a minimum that



one deputy's office in each county be open to the public for at least four hours each weekend, provided that if only one deputy's office is located within the boundary of the county seat, that office is the office that shall be open for the four-hour period each weekend;

(h) Specify that every deputy registrar, upon request, provide any person with information about the location and office hours of all deputy registrars in the county;

(i) Allow a deputy registrar contract to be awarded to a nonprofit corporation formed under the laws of this state;

(j) Establish procedures for a deputy registrar to request the authority to collect reinstatement fees under sections 4507.1612, 4507.45, 4509.101, 4509.81, 4510.10, 4510.22, 4510.72, and 4511.191 of the Revised Code and to transmit the reinstatement fees and two dollars of the service fee collected under those sections. The registrar shall ensure that at least one deputy registrar in each county has the necessary equipment and is able to accept reinstatement fees. The registrar shall deposit the service fees received from a deputy registrar under those sections into the public safety - highway purposes fund created in section 4501.06 of the Revised Code and shall use the money for deputy registrar equipment necessary in connection with accepting reinstatement fees.

(k) Establish standards for a deputy registrar, when the deputy registrar is not a county auditor or a clerk of a court of common pleas, to sell advertising rights to third party businesses to be placed in the deputy registrar's office;

(l) Allow any deputy registrar that is not a county auditor or a clerk of a court of common pleas to operate a vending machine;

(m) Establish such other requirements as the registrar and director consider necessary to provide a high level of service.

(2) The rules may allow both of the following:

(a) The registrar to award a contract to a deputy registrar to operate more than one deputy registrar's office if determined by the registrar to be practical;



(b) A nonprofit corporation formed for the purposes of providing automobile-related services to its members or the public and that provides such services from more than one location in this state to operate a deputy registrar office at any location.

(3) As a daily adjustment, the bureau of motor vehicles shall credit to a deputy registrar the amount established under section 4503.038 of the Revised Code for each damaged license plate or validation sticker the deputy registrar replaces as a service to a member of the public.

(4)(a) With the prior approval of the registrar, each deputy registrar may conduct at the location of the deputy registrar's office any business that is consistent with the functions of a deputy registrar and that is not specifically mandated or authorized by this or another chapter of the Revised Code or by implementing rules of the registrar.

(b) In accordance with guidelines the director of public safety shall establish, a deputy registrar may operate or contract for the operation of a vending machine at a deputy registrar location if products of the vending machine are consistent with the functions of a deputy registrar.

(c) A deputy registrar may enter into an agreement with the Ohio turnpike and infrastructure commission pursuant to division (A)(11) of section 5537.04 of the Revised Code for the purpose of allowing the general public to acquire from the deputy registrar the electronic toll collection devices that are used under the multi-jurisdiction electronic toll collection agreement between the Ohio turnpike and infrastructure commission and any other entities or agencies that participate in such an agreement. The approval of the registrar is not necessary if a deputy registrar engages in this activity.

(5) As used in this section and in section 4507.01 of the Revised Code, "nonprofit corporation" has the same meaning as in section 1702.01 of the Revised Code.

(E)(1) Unless otherwise terminated and except for interim contracts lasting not longer than one year, contracts with deputy registrars shall be entered into through a competitive selection process and shall be limited in duration as follows:



- (a) For contracts entered into between July 1, 1996 and June 29, 2014, for a period of not less than two years, but not more than three years;
- (b) For contracts entered into on or after June 29, 2014, for a period of five years, unless the registrar determines that a shorter contract term is appropriate for a particular deputy registrar.
- (2) All contracts with deputy registrars shall expire on the last Saturday of June in the year of their expiration. Prior to the expiration of any deputy registrar contract, the registrar, with the approval of the director, may award a one-year contract extension to any deputy registrar who has provided exemplary service based upon objective performance evaluations.
- (3)(a) The auditor of state may examine the accounts, reports, systems, and other data of each deputy registrar at least every two years. The registrar, with the approval of the director, shall immediately remove a deputy who violates any provision of the Revised Code related to the duties as a deputy, any rule adopted by the registrar, or a term of the deputy's contract with the registrar. The registrar also may remove a deputy who, in the opinion of the registrar, has engaged in any conduct that is either unbecoming to one representing this state or is inconsistent with the efficient operation of the deputy's office.
- (b) If the registrar, with the approval of the director, determines that there is good cause to believe that a deputy registrar or a person proposing for a deputy registrar contract has engaged in any conduct that would require the denial or termination of the deputy registrar contract, the registrar may require the production of books, records, and papers as the registrar determines are necessary, and may take the depositions of witnesses residing within or outside the state in the same manner as is prescribed by law for the taking of depositions in civil actions in the court of common pleas, and for that purpose the registrar may issue a subpoena for any witness or a subpoena duces tecum to compel the production of any books, records, or papers, directed to the sheriff of the county where the witness resides or is found. Such a subpoena shall be served and returned in the same manner as a subpoena in a criminal case is served and returned. The fees of the sheriff shall be the same as that allowed in the court of common pleas in criminal cases. Witnesses shall be paid the fees and mileage provided for under section 119.094 of the Revised Code. The fees and mileage shall be paid from the fund in the state treasury for the use of the agency in the same manner as other expenses of the agency are paid.



In any case of disobedience or neglect of any subpoena served on any person or the refusal of any witness to testify to any matter regarding which the witness lawfully may be interrogated, the court of common pleas of any county where the disobedience, neglect, or refusal occurs or any judge of that court, on application by the registrar, shall compel obedience by attachment proceedings for contempt, as in the case of disobedience of the requirements of a subpoena issued from that court, or a refusal to testify in that court.

(4) Nothing in division (E) of this section shall be construed to require a hearing of any nature prior to the termination of any deputy registrar contract by the registrar, with the approval of the director, for cause.

(F) Except as provided in section 2743.03 of the Revised Code, no court, other than the court of common pleas of Franklin county, has jurisdiction of any action against the department of public safety, the director, the bureau, or the registrar to restrain the exercise of any power or authority, or to entertain any action for declaratory judgment, in the selection and appointment of, or contracting with, deputy registrars. Neither the department, the director, the bureau, nor the registrar is liable in any action at law for damages sustained by any person because of any acts of the department, the director, the bureau, or the registrar, or of any employee of the department or bureau, in the performance of official duties in the selection and appointment of, and contracting with, deputy registrars.

(G) The registrar shall assign to each deputy registrar a series of numbers sufficient to supply the demand at all times in the area the deputy registrar serves, and the registrar shall keep a record in the registrar's office of the numbers within the series assigned. Except as otherwise provided in section 3.061 of the Revised Code, each deputy shall be required to give bond in the amount of at least twenty-five thousand dollars, or in such higher amount as the registrar determines necessary, based on a uniform schedule of bond amounts established by the registrar and determined by the volume of registrations handled by the deputy. The form of the bond shall be prescribed by the registrar. The bonds required of deputy registrars, in the discretion of the registrar, may be individual or schedule bonds or may be included in any blanket bond coverage carried by the department.

(H) Each deputy registrar shall keep a file of each application received by the deputy and shall



register that motor vehicle with the name and address of its owner.

(I) Upon request, a deputy registrar shall make the physical inspection of a motor vehicle and issue the physical inspection certificate required in section 4505.061 of the Revised Code.

(J) Each deputy registrar shall file a report semiannually with the registrar of motor vehicles listing the number of applicants for licenses the deputy has served, the number of voter registration applications the deputy has completed and transmitted to the board of elections, and the number of voter registration applications declined.