



2026 South Dakota Legislature

Senate Bill 83

Introduced by: **Senator Howard**

1 **An Act to require that any holder of a commercial driver license in this state must**
 2 **be proficient in the English language, and to provide a penalty therefor.**

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA:

4 **Section 1. That § 32-12A-11 be AMENDED:**

5 **32-12A-11.** ~~No person may be issued a commercial learner's permit unless that person~~
 6 ~~is a resident of this state and has passed the required knowledge test.~~

7 ~~No person may be issued a commercial driver license unless that person is a~~
 8 ~~resident of this state, has received driver training from a provider listed on the Training~~
 9 ~~Provider Registry established by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration pursuant~~
 10 ~~to 49 C.F.R. Part 380, Subpart G, as of September 30, 2019, has passed a knowledge and~~
 11 ~~skills test for driving a commercial motor vehicle that complies with the minimum federal~~
 12 ~~standards established by federal regulation enumerated in 49 C.F.R. Part 383, Subparts~~
 13 ~~G and H, as of September 30, 2019, and has satisfied all other requirements of the CMVSA~~
 14 ~~in addition to other requirements imposed by state law or federal regulation. The tests~~
 15 ~~shall be prescribed and conducted by the department.~~

16 ~~The department may authorize a person, an employer, a private driver training~~
 17 ~~facility, other private institution, a department, agency, or instrumentality of local~~
 18 ~~government, of this state or another state, to administer the skills test specified by this~~
 19 ~~section, if:~~

20 ~~(1) The test is the same which would otherwise be administered by the~~
 21 ~~department;~~

22 ~~(2) The third party has entered into an agreement with the department that~~
 23 ~~complies with requirements of 49 C.F.R. Part 383.75 as of September 30, 2019. Failure~~
 24 ~~to comply with the agreement may result in termination of the agreement; and~~

25 ~~(3) The third party, prior to administering the skills test to any person, verifies the~~
 26 ~~person has completed the driver training specified in this section.~~

1 ~~The department may waive the knowledge and skills tests specified in this section~~
2 ~~for a commercial driver license applicant who meets the requirements of 49 C.F.R. Part~~
3 ~~383.77 as of September 30, 2019.~~

4 ~~No commercial learner's permit or commercial driver license may be issued to a~~
5 ~~person while the person is subject to a disqualification from driving a commercial motor~~
6 ~~vehicle, or while the person's operator's license or driving privilege is suspended, revoked,~~
7 ~~or cancelled in any state; nor may a commercial driver license be issued to a person who~~
8 ~~has a commercial driver license, noncommercial driver license, noncommercial instruction~~
9 ~~permit or commercial learner's permit issued by any other state unless the person first~~
10 ~~surrenders all such licenses or permits. The department shall destroy any license or permit~~
11 ~~surrendered under this section. The issuing jurisdiction shall be notified that the licensee~~
12 ~~has applied for a commercial learner's permit or commercial driver license in a new~~
13 ~~jurisdiction. A violation of this provision is a Class 2 misdemeanor.~~

14 Except as otherwise provided in this section, a person may not be issued a
15 commercial learner's permit unless that person:

16 (1) Is a resident of this state for the purpose of being licensed to drive a motor vehicle,
17 as described in § 32-12-26.1; and

18 (2) Has passed the general knowledge test that is required by 49 C.F.R. § 383.25
19 (January 1, 2026) and which complies with the minimum standards contained in
20 49 C.F.R. §§ 383.91 to 383.135, inclusive (January 1, 2026) for the commercial
21 vehicle that the person expects to operate.

22 The department may waive the knowledge test specified in this section for an
23 applicant who has experience operating a military commercial motor vehicle and meets
24 the requirements established in 49 C.F.R. § 383.77 (January 1, 2026).

25 **Section 2. That a NEW SECTION be added to chapter 32-12A:**

26 Except as otherwise provided in this section, a person may not be issued a
27 commercial driver license unless that person:

28 (1) Is a resident of this state for the purpose of being licensed to drive a motor vehicle,
29 as described in § 32-12-26.1;

30 (2) Meets the general requirements of 49 C.F.R. § 383.23 (January 1, 2026) and has
31 passed the knowledge and driving skills tests that meet the federal standards
32 contained in 49 C.F.R. §§ 383.110 to 383.135, inclusive (January 1, 2026);

1 (3) Has received entry-level driver training from a provider that meets the federal
2 standards established in 49 C.F.R. §§ 380.700 to 380.725, inclusive (January 1,
3 2026); and

4 (4) Has demonstrated proficiency in the English language, as required in the general
5 qualifications for commercial motor vehicle drivers established in 49 C.F.R.
6 § 391.11 (January 1, 2026).

7 The department may waive the knowledge and skills tests specified in this section
8 for an applicant who has experience operating a military commercial motor vehicle and
9 meets the requirements established in 49 C.F.R. § 383.77 (January 1, 2026).

10 **Section 3. That a NEW SECTION be added to chapter 32-12A:**

11 The department may authorize a third party to administer the skills test described
12 in section 2 of this Act, provided that the department and the third party comply with the
13 requirements of 49 C.F.R. § 383.75 (January 1, 2026).

14 **Section 4. That a NEW SECTION be added to chapter 32-12A:**

15 The department may not issue a commercial learner's permit or commercial driver
16 license to a person while the person is subject to a disqualification from driving a
17 commercial motor vehicle, or while the person's operator's license or driving privilege is
18 suspended, revoked, or cancelled in any state.

19 The department may not issue a commercial driver license to a person who has a
20 commercial driver license, noncommercial driver license, noncommercial instruction
21 permit, or commercial learner's permit issued by any other state, unless the person first
22 surrenders the license or permit. The department shall destroy any license or permit
23 surrendered under this section. The department shall notify the issuing jurisdiction that
24 the license holder has surrendered the license or permit, in keeping with the single license
25 requirement established in 49 C.F.R. § 383.21 (January 1, 2026), to obtain a commercial
26 learner's permit or commercial driver license in this state.

27 **Section 5. That a NEW SECTION be added to chapter 32-12A:**

28 The department shall determine whether an applicant meets the English language
29 proficiency requirement set forth in section 2 of this Act by:

30 (1) Administering all knowledge and skills tests in English; and

1 (2) Conducting an oral interview with an applicant, in English, if the applicant is
2 applying for a commercial driver license.

3 The department shall promulgate rules, in accordance with chapter 1-26, to
4 establish a list of open-ended questions to facilitate conversation regarding traffic signs
5 and signals, official inquiries by traffic officers, and reports and records necessary to the
6 operation of a commercial motor vehicle. The interviewer may ask any three questions
7 from the list during the oral interview to determine whether the applicant demonstrates
8 the required English language proficiency to obtain a commercial driver license in this
9 state.

10 The department may contract with a third party to conduct the interview required
11 by this section.

12 **Section 6. That a NEW SECTION be added to chapter 32-12A:**

13 An applicant for a commercial driver license who passes the knowledge and driving
14 tests but fails to demonstrate English language proficiency in the oral interview may repeat
15 the oral interview after fourteen days. The applicant may not obtain a commercial driver
16 license without demonstrating English language proficiency.

17 If the holder of a commercial driver license has not yet demonstrated English
18 language proficiency, the department must conduct an oral interview to determine English
19 language proficiency at the time the driver renews the commercial driver license.

20 If the holder of a commercial driver license or commercial learner's permit from a
21 jurisdiction outside this state is issued a citation for a traffic offense, or is involved in a
22 traffic accident, a law enforcement officer, except an officer acting under the authority of
23 § 32-2-7, may use the list of questions required by section 5 of this Act to determine
24 whether the driver has sufficient English language proficiency to operate a commercial
25 vehicle in this state.

26 The offense of operating a commercial motor vehicle in this state without sufficient
27 English language proficiency is:

28 (1) A Class 2 misdemeanor for a first offense; and

29 (2) A Class 1 misdemeanor for a second or subsequent offense.