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Legislator: Weigh in on Salem DMV hours

Kevin Cameron
Guest Opinion

Many transactions with DMV can be done online 24/7, but some transactions still need personal one-on-one attention. With DMV's decision to end Saturday service, this is a real challenge for working adults.

Consider the parent who must take their teenager to take their driver's test. Currently, they have to take time away from work and possibly take their student out of school in order to take the exam and driving test.

You finally have a chance to weigh in on this on Monday at the Oregon Legislature. A little background on how we got here.

In response to mandatory furlough time, the Salem Driver and Motor Vehicle Services office decided a few years ago to close both offices simultaneously. This left the greater Salem community without any service. At the time, I stressed that the leadership of DMV could have achieved the same cost savings by alternating the closure of the two facilities in Salem or, better yet, staggering days off and keeping both facilities open.

The approach the DMV took was explained as the "easier" way. We all know that private retail businesses would fail if they took the "easy" approach.

On Jan. 31, 2012, the director of the DMV informed the Legislature via email that they would be ending Saturday service across the state. He shared with me that Saturdays were the busiest days of the week at the South Salem DMV, with over 11,000 customer visits during 2011. Approximately 70 percent of the Saturday transactions are related to driver's licensing, so wait times for counter staff and machines became so lengthy that it led to "customers slamming the door so hard it broke."

Additionally, technical specialists at DMV headquarters were not available on Saturdays to support field offices in completing complex transactions, causing people a second visit during the week. As a result of the high Saturday volume, the director decided to move toward closure of the few locations that were open on Saturdays.

In business, if there are long lines and many customers, you don't close the doors. I objected to the closures.

On July 2, 2012, the South Salem DMV Saturday service was terminated. In response, I filed HB 2411 that would require the DMV to have alternative hours for our citizens — some evening and/or Saturday hours.

So on Monday, you have a chance to come to the Capitol and testify on how you'd like to have the services of your DMV available. Of course, the hearing is at 3 p.m. on a Monday, so you will likely need to take time off from work to attend. (Yet another example of government not being easily available for the citizens it serves.)

If you are unable to make it but would like to be heard, please submit written testimony to my office and I will make sure your emails and letters are put on the record. If you'd like to testify by phone, our office can arrange this for you too.

I will continue to be a voice promoting customer service by our governmental agencies. I believe that their mission is to serve you, the customer.

Kevin Cameron, R-Salem, represents House District 19 which includes portions of Salem, Aumsville and Turner. He is CEO of Cafe Today Restaurants. Contact him at Rep.KevinCameron@state.or.us or (503) 986-1419.
