
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5214

AN ACT CONCERNING BATTERSON PARK.

SUMMARY

This bill increases the Passport to the Parks fee that people registering vehicles in the state must pay by \$0.50 for Fiscal Year 2026. Currently, the fee is \$15 for a triennial registration, \$10 for a biennial registration, and \$5 for an annual registration. (Annual registrations are only available to those age 65 or over.) The bill requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner, with the motor vehicles commissioner, to then adjust the fee every two years to reflect changes in the consumer price index. By law, collected fees must be deposited in the Passport to the Parks account (see BACKGROUND).

The bill expands the purposes for which money in the Passport to the Parks account may be spent to include the care, maintenance, and operation of Batterson Park, which is owned by the city of Hartford and located in Farmington and New Britain.

Lastly, the bill requires DEEP, Hartford, and Riverfront Recapture to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) about Batterson Park's care, maintenance, and operation. (Riverfront Recapture is a nonprofit organization that manages, maintains, and operates four riverfront parks and their connected riverwalks and trails.) Under the bill, the MOU may authorize (1) Riverfront Recapture's agents and employees to enter, maintain, and operate Batterson Park and (2) DEEP to give Riverfront Recapture a grant each fiscal year from the Passport to the Parks account for these purposes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024, except for the MOU requirement, which takes effect upon passage.

BACKGROUND

Passport to the Parks Account

Under existing law, the Passport to the Parks account must be used to pay for the care, maintenance, operation, and improvement of state parks and campgrounds; fund soil and water conservation districts and environmental review teams; and pay the Council on Environmental Quality's expenses. In addition, the law requires DEEP to pay \$100,000 each fiscal year to each of the following entities from the account:

1. Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District,
2. Eastern Conservation District,
3. North Central Conservation District,
4. Northwest Conservation District,
5. Southwest Conservation District,
6. Connecticut Environmental Review Team, and
7. Connecticut Council on Water and Soil Conservation.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 27 Nay 6 (03/08/2024)