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The RMV gives everyone the license to have a new identity.(Arts and Lifestyle)



[The Boston Herald](#)
December 28, 1999 | [Teitell, Beth](#)

Who needs the federal Witness Protection Program when the state's own Registry of Motor Vehicles freely hands out new identities? And you don't even have to move to Idaho!

I know people complain about the **RMV**, but where else can you go in, as say, "Beth Teitell," and come out as "Gwyneth Paltrow" without showing any evidence? Not a passport. Not a birth certificate. Not Gwyneth's mother's maiden name. Heck, you don't even need a swan neck or an Oscar statue.

I got married recently, and wanted to put my new name on my driver's license. I know women who've put this off for years, daunted by the amount of paperwork they imagined would be involved. "Getting divorced seems

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simpler," a married woman still going by her maiden name on her license told me.

But a call to the agency proved otherwise. "Just bring \$15," the woman said, brightly adding, "and you don't need any proof."

Naturally, I suspected a trick. I mean, this is an agency with a reputation for letting you wait in a line for two, three days, and then just when you get to the front, mentioning that you're in the wrong line. Sorry. Start over.

So despite what I'd been told on the phone, I went armed with everything a woman needs to prove who she is: gym ID, Visa statement, hairdresser's business card.

I filled out an application, signed my new name, smiled for a picture and handed over my old license. That was that. "Don't I have to show you a marriage certificate or any documentation?" I asked after I had my temporary license safely in my hands.

The young clerk seemed baffled. "I don't really know what the deal is," she said. "They didn't check it up there?"

Me: "No."

Her: "I think that when it comes to name changes you can do whatever you want."

Apparently.

Sure, I had to sign a form affirming "under the penalties of perjury, that the information I have provided in this application is true," but if I'm already a felon - or planning on becoming one thanks to my new state-issued ID - why

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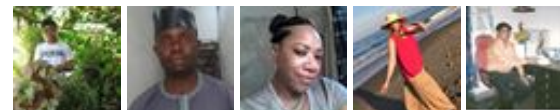
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am I going to be scared of a little perjury charge?

Especially when the driver's license is the key to everything. When I went to redeem a \$9.02 merchandise credit at the Gap the other day, what did I have to show? Driver's license.

And excuse me if I'm wrong, but aren't Bill and Monica doing just fine, despite their brushes with perjury? He still gets to hear "Hail to the Chief" when he walks into a room, and she was recently named one of the "10 most fascinating people of the year" by Barbara Walters, and is being paid by Jenny Craig to lose weight.

I called Robert Horack, the **RMV**'s general counsel, and asked if the agency wasn't a little loose. He explained that "as a matter of law, it is not necessary to go to probate court and have a petition for a change of name to use another name, as long as you're not going to use another name for an unlawful purpose."

But what if unlawfulness is precisely my plan? I asked.

He was quiet for a moment. "That's a hard question to answer," he began, but then he hit his stride, explaining that while I could change my name without showing any proof, I couldn't change my Social Security number or date of birth, which are both on record with the agency, as is my original name. And, he added, it's not even that hard to get a forged marriage certificate, so requiring it wouldn't really help matters.

What that all means is that even if I'm masquerading to the world as Gwyneth Paltrow - or trying to - the **RMV** would always be able to trace "her" to me.

Yeah, but I can sure have plenty of fun in the meantime.

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