

Cherokee Nation Motor Vehicle Tag Compact FAQ

Q: If the Cherokee Nation does not have a Motor Vehicle Tag Compact with the state in place after the compact expires Dec. 31, 2024, is Cherokee Nation still able to sell and issue vehicle tags and titles to Cherokee Nation citizens?

A: Yes and no. As a sovereign nation, the Cherokee Nation has the authority to issue vehicles tags and charge motor vehicle taxes within the Cherokee Reservation without a compact. Unfortunately, this authority will not extend beyond the boundaries of the Cherokee Reservation without the State of Oklahoma's agreement. The Cherokee Nation remains committed to achieving compact terms that are good for Cherokee citizens and the State of Oklahoma. We were successful partners with the State for nearly two decades prior to Governor Stitt and we will remain willing to negotiate a fair deal.

Q: What do other tribes do? Do other tribes have vehicle tag compacts with the state or do they issue vehicle tags without a compact?

A: Some tribes currently operate under compacts with the state, while other tribes do not. Because each tribe is a separate sovereign, compact models vary and the recent compacts executed by the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations are vastly different than what the Cherokee Nation and the state agreed to in 2002, and then modified in 2013 to extend statewide.

For instance, since 2002 the Cherokee Nation has operated its own tag agencies. Today the Cherokee Nation operates seven tag agencies throughout the Cherokee Nation Reservation, employing 80 people and serving tens of thousands Citizens annually. The Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations sell their vehicle tags through Oklahoma tag agencies across the state.

Other tribes have opted to issue vehicle tags under their sovereign authority, without compacts, within their respective reservations.

Q: If I just bought my Cherokee Nation vehicle tag does that mean it won't be legal after Dec. 31, 2024?

A: No, a vehicle tag validly issued under the compact will remain valid until the month the tag expires. **You may still freely travel with your lawfully issued Cherokee Nation vehicle tag until it expires.**

If you are Citizen living beyond the boundaries of the Cherokee Reservation and the compact expires on Dec. 31, without a new compact in place, you could not come to the Cherokee Nation and renew your vehicle tag for additional years.

Q: Why can't the Cherokee Nation issue tribal car tags outside of the reservation without a compact??

A: Without a compact with the State of Oklahoma, the Cherokee Nation has no legal authority to issue and sell car tags outside the Cherokee Nation Reservation.

Q: If there is no compact in place, will local communities be affected?

A: If no compact is in place on Dec. 31, the successful framework we have had will end. Our car tag compact has delivered \$258 million in revenue since it started.

In 2002, the State of Oklahoma and the Cherokee Nation specifically designed a compact framework that would give directly to communities: 38 percent to schools, 20 percent roads and infrastructure, and to law enforcement.

That has meant \$92 million to school districts, \$50 million to roads and infrastructure, and \$9 million to law enforcement. The rest of the funds go to other important programs, such as Cherokee Nation Head Start and Cherokee Nation Wildlife programs. The state itself has even reaped several millions.

Without this framework, these contributions will likely drastically change.

Q: Why is Governor Stitt not extending our tribal vehicle tag compact?

A: Following the 2020 *McGirt v. Oklahoma* Supreme Court decision, Governor Stitt has repeatedly sought ways to push back on tribal sovereignty. For example, the Cherokee Nation had a hunting and fishing compact with the state for years that provided state-wide licenses for Cherokee citizens while generating millions of dollars in revenue for the state; Governor Stitt recently let that compact expire in a continued effort to attack the *McGirt* ruling and tribal sovereignty at large. Governor Stitt has also challenged tribal gaming compacts across the state and refused to negotiate fair terms with tribes. His challenges resulted in costly federal court litigation, ultimately ending in a judgment declaring that the gaming compacts automatically renewed for an additional term.

Q: Could the Cherokee Nation ever offer at-large citizens car tags in the future?

A: Certainly, we maintain hope that the Governor will recognize the best solution for all Oklahomans is to work collaboratively with tribes, instead of trying to force one-size-fits-all solutions on distinct sovereigns. The Cherokee Nation is hopeful and committed to continue negotiating with the State of Oklahoma for a fair compact that acknowledges our compacting history in the future.

Q: If I have a Cherokee Nation vehicle tag, can I drive off the Cherokee Nation Reservation without getting a ticket?

A: Yes. Vehicle tags issued by the Cherokee Nation are valid under the law and our existing compact. Valid Cherokee Nation tags are valid on vehicles driven anywhere in the state or the country.

If we are unable to extend or renew our compacts with the State of Oklahoma, we will continue to lawfully issue tags to Citizens residing within the Cherokee Nation Reservation and all at-large vehicle tags lawfully issued under the compact will remain valid until their scheduled expiration.