



Dear State of Missouri Team,

Whenever I look back over this past year, I'm always struck by how much we accomplished in such a short period of time. The arrival of COVID-19 required each of us to adapt to meet the needs of Missourians. Together, we reimagined, developed, organized and shared. We also learned. From our hard days to our great successes, we are taking away countless lessons and new ways of working.

The pandemic reinforced how critical it is that we continue investing in technology. When COVID-19 came to Missouri last year, it was the middle of tax season, the busiest time of year for us. Remote work came into the picture and tax deadlines were extended. But our tax season went about as smoothly as it could, given the circumstances. This was due in large part to prior investments in a new integrated tax system. And, our 24/7 virtual assistant chatbot, DORA.

Since going live in November 2019, DORA has handled more than 1.8 million customer inquiries. Throughout 2020, we continued to release new enhancements. Our goal was to make it easier for customers to interact with DORA. Today, customers can chat with DORA on Facebook, through text and speech-to-text/text-to-speech. They can also get directions to the closest license office, with help from Google Maps.

Ahead of the 2021 tax season, we launched our new Property Tax Credit Claim e-filing system. We are also now scanning the majority of our incoming correspondence. This will make sure that our teams can access necessary information to help customers and complete transactions. Our call centers from the Division of Taxation, Motor Vehicle and Driver Licensing also transitioned to new phone systems. The centers are providing 24/7 self-service options and further supporting our team's remote work capabilities.

It is thanks to the hard work and dedication of our team members that we are able to invest in programs like DORA. These modern changes are making the difference in how we are meeting customer needs. Both now and in the future.

For example, [the IRS announced last month that the nation's tax season would begin on February 12](#). This allows the IRS more time to update their systems given the pandemic-related tax law changes that took effect at the end of 2020. **Since e-filed state returns are first sent to the IRS, this means the Department's "start date" for accepting and processing e-filed returns will also be February 12, instead of January 25.** We are better positioned to navigate these changes and continue providing seamless service to our customers. This is thanks to system upgrades we've already made, the staffing plans our teammates have refined, and the cross-education we've enacted.

Last fall, license offices received new driver license system workstations and software upgrades. One of the immediate benefits we saw was increased efficiency in scanning documents. This includes passports, which customers often present when applying for a REAL ID-compliant driver license or ID card. These new systems will save customers and license office staff valuable time.

As a reminder, the REAL ID enforcement deadline is October 1, 2021. On this date, you will be required to present a REAL ID-compliant driver license or ID card, or another form of acceptable ID, to board domestic flights, access federal facilities and enter nuclear power plants. Last March, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security delayed the October 1, 2020 enforcement date due to the pandemic. To date, over 834,000 Missourians have chosen to get a REAL ID-compliant license or ID card. You can learn more about REAL ID at dor.mo.gov/drivers/real-id-information/.

We are also exploring a way to keep at least one of the new services that came about during the pandemic. Last year, we were able to install a temporary phone-in renewal service for vehicle registrations. This was thanks to CARES Act funding. Although the service ended in December, it was popular with customers. We will continue to check funding options to make it permanent.

This past year has brought unprecedented challenging times, and we're not out of the woods yet. But, like many of you, I'm hopeful and excited for the future. With every passing day, more and more Missourians are receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. We've come so far, and I know we will emerge from this pandemic a more unified, resilient team.

We will continue to fulfill our goal of providing customers with the best experience in 2021. We are a part of a great State of Missouri team and we will continue partnering with you to meet our citizens' needs. **We're proud to be your colleagues — thank you for being ours and for all you do.**

Sincerely,

Ken Zellers
Director of Revenue