

My name is **Nick Waringa, and I am a resident of Waterbury, Vermont**. I am writing to raise a serious concern about the Vermont DMV's current treatment of legally imported Japanese "Kei" vehicles.

I have included the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Transportation Committees, along with my local representatives, because this issue appears to require both oversight and clear statewide guidance.

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### ***Request: DMV Accountability and Statewide Clarification***

I am asking for two specific actions:

- Direct oversight and engagement with the Vermont DMV regarding their **refusal or obstruction of registrations for federally legal Kei vehicles**.
- **Clear, consistent statewide guidance to DMV offices and inspection stations** confirming how these vehicles are to be registered and inspected under existing Vermont and federal law.

Right now, the process is inconsistent, confusing, and in practice feels discriminatory.

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### ***Ongoing Issues with Vermont DMV Registration***

What is currently happening at the Vermont DMV regarding Kei-class Japanese import vehicles has become unnecessarily difficult and adversarial.

These vehicles are federally legal to import and own, yet the DMV is refusing registrations outright or making the process unreasonably burdensome. I personally own three such vehicles (two imported from Japan and one purchased domestically). After an excessive amount of persistence, I was ultimately permitted to register mine — but only after **significant resistance, multiple dmV trips, rude dmV staff, and conflicting information from the dmV**.

During this process, I have repeatedly been told:

- "We can't register it."
- "Those vehicles are illegal."
- "Those will be illegal soon."
- "You won't be able to inspect it."

In one case, a DMV official refused to proceed without speaking to the Deputy Commissioner, citing vague "safety concerns", they then closed the Harley Davidson blinds to their window to check. The overall experience has been hostile, including being treated as though I was attempting something improper simply for registering a lawful vehicle.

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### ***The Facts About Japanese Kei Vehicles***

These vehicles are:

- Affordable and durable
- Extremely fuel efficient
- Simple and inexpensive to maintain

- Excellent for hauling and utility use
- Not designed for highway speeds above 55 mph (already addressed in Vermont law)
- Federally legal to import under the 25-year exemption
- Emissions-exempt as required under federal import rules
- Exceptionally environmentally beneficial by extending vehicle life rather than requiring new production (the most environmentally costly step)

Approximately **7,500 Kei vehicles are estimated to be imported nationwide in 2025.**

For example, I purchased my truck for \$8,000 fully shipped from Japan, with only 10,000 original miles. It is a fraction of the cost of a Toyota Tacoma, with reduced load capacity — a tradeoff many Vermonters would reasonably choose.

These vehicles are also at least as safe as motorcycles, and often comparable to antique vehicles already registered in Vermont. Vermont maintains a reasonable 25-year antique carveout, which applies equally here.

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### ***The DMV Operations Do Not Match Reality***

The DMV has implied these vehicles are unsafe or cannot meet inspection or emissions requirements. These claims do not hold up:

- Kei vehicles imported legally are federally approved and emissions-exempt - they can't come into the country otherwise
- They qualify under NHTSA's safety exemption - They are no less safe than many antique vehicles already registered in Vermont
- **If the DMV believes these vehicles are unsafe, they should be required to provide actual crash or safety data supporting that conclusion.**

The suggestion that Vermont is not making registration difficult is simply not true. The barriers are real, repeated, and inconsistent across offices and staff. I registered mine in Montpelier, *it was a pain*.

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### ***Broader National Context***

Nationally, this issue appears driven more by industry pressure than evidence-based safety concerns.

For example:

- Maine recently banned Kei vehicles under suspicious circumstances
- This occurred following potential lobbying tied to the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, which has strong automotive industry influence

The reality is that US automakers have a financial interest in preventing Kei vehicles from becoming widespread, because they provide an affordable alternative that could reduce inflated used and new vehicle prices. Vermonters should not bear the cost of that kind of market protection.

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*Closing*

I have included photos of my Kei vehicles. If you have never seen one in person, I would be happy to show you this spring. Thank you sincerely for your time and attention. I hope you will ensure that Vermont residents are not prevented from registering and inspecting these vehicles.

Respectfully,  
Nick Waringa