

---

## Transportation Committee

---

### HB 2361

**Brief Description:** Concerning vehicle license plate replacement and change of ownership.

**Sponsors:** Representatives DeBolt, Harris, Ross, Rodne and Manweller.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires standard issue license plates be replaced when ownership of a vehicle changes.
- Provides that a new vehicle registration is valid for a 12-month period, unless there is a change in ownership during that time period, in which case the existing registration expires.
- Requires an owner or an owner's representative when taking ownership of a vehicle, to apply for replacement license plate(s) along with a new 12-month registration.
- Allows for the new owner of a vehicle be given credit for the portion of a motor vehicle tax that reflects the remaining period for which the tax was initially paid by the previous vehicle owner.
- Requires the Department of Licensing to offer to the registered vehicle owner the option of retaining the current license plate number when obtaining replacement license plates.
- Provides that when a vehicle is sold to a vehicle dealer for resale, the application for a replacement plate or plates is not required to be made until the vehicle is sold by the vehicle dealer.
- Removes the mandatory replacement of license plates.
- Provides that special license plates issued before discontinuation of a special license plate series are valid until the license plate is replaced.
- Provides that the requirements will apply to vehicle registrations that are due or become due on or after January 1, 2015.

**Hearing Date:** 2/3/14

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Staff:** Jerry Long (786-7306).

**Background:**

The Department of Licensing (DOL) in 1997 (Substitute House Bill 1008) was directed to use empirical studies to document the longevity of the reflective material used to make license plates and determine how often license plates need to be replaced, providing the DOL authorization to adopt rules for implementation. The DOL began replacing license plates under this program in 2000.

Research conducted when the program started indicated seven years as the most common replacement cycle among states with similar programs. In 2006 the DOL hired an independent consultant to study the seven-year replacement program. At that time some states had license plate replacement programs that ranged from five years to 10 years. The manufacturer's warranty on the license plate materials is five years. The states surveyed had an average replacement cycle of 6.8 years. The seven-year license plate replacement period is in Washington Administrative Code.

There are a few type of plates that are exempt from the plate replacement program. These are: prorated vehicles over 16,000 pounds; commercial vehicles with a declared gross weight over 26,000 pounds; collector vehicle plates; horseless carriage vehicle restored plates; plates issued to government agencies with exempt use class; and Medal of Honor license plates.

The plate replacement plate fee is \$10 per plate and \$2 for the reflective fee or \$24 for a set of license plates. If a vehicle wishes to retain their existing license plate number, for a fee of \$10 per plate the person will receive a new plate(s) with that number.

**Summary of Bill:**

The bill:

- requires standard issue license plates be replaced when ownership of a vehicle changes. In addition to the all other taxes and fees due upon change in ownership, a registered vehicle owner that wants to keep their standard issue license can pay the license plate transfer fee of \$10 per plate and retain their license plate;
- provides that a new vehicle registration is valid for a 12-month period, unless there is a change in ownership during that time period, in which case the existing registration expires;
- requires an owner or an owner's representative, when taking ownership of a vehicle, to apply for replacement license plate(s) along with a new 12-month registration. The new owner will be given credit for the portion of a motor vehicle tax that reflects the remaining period for which the tax was initially paid by the previous vehicle owner;
- requires the DOL to offer to the vehicle owner the option of retaining the current license plate number when obtaining replacement license plates;
- provides that when a vehicle is sold to a vehicle dealer for resale, the application for a replacement plate or plates is not required to be made until the vehicle is sold by the vehicle dealer;
- removes the mandatory replacement of license plates. The registered vehicle owner may replace the plates if the plate or plates have been lost, defaced, or illegible;

- provides that special license plates issued before discontinuation of a special license plate series are valid until the license plate is replaced; and
- provides that these requirements will apply to vehicle registrations that are due or become due on or after January 1, 2015.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.