

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1008

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, April 3, 1997

Title: An act relating to license plates.

Brief Description: Standardizing issuance of license plates.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation Policy & Budget (originally sponsored by Representatives Robertson, Fisher, Chandler, Hatfield, Johnson, Zellinsky and L. Thomas).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/27/97, 4/3/97 [DPA, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Goings, Heavey, Morton, Oke, Rasmussen and Sellar.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Horn and Patterson.

Staff: Jennifer Joly (786-7305)

Background: The 1996 supplemental transportation budget directed the Legislative Transportation Committee (LTC) to develop recommendations regarding motor vehicle license plates. The primary impetus for this review was an inordinate number of bills requesting special license plates for fund-raising purposes.

The LTC established a license plate working group, comprised of six legislators to spearhead the review. The working group met four times during the interim and developed legislative recommendations aimed at curtailing the number of special license plates.

Summary of Amended Bill: Special license plates may be issued from currently existing series, but the creation of additional special license plate series is prohibited. Furthermore, following an initial issuance period of three years, the Department of Licensing (DOL) is granted the authority to discontinue a special license plate series if sales are nominal.

Except for collector vehicle license plates issued prior to January 1, 1987, Congressional Medal of Honor license plates, and license plates issued for commercial vehicles with a gross weight in excess of 26,000 pounds, all license plates must be issued on a standard background designated by DOL, effective January 1, 2001.

With a few exceptions (primarily for military service recognition plates), effective January 1, 1998, the original fees for special license plates are set at \$40, with \$12 earmarked for

DOL's administrative costs. Effective January 1, 1999, special license plate renewals are set at \$30, with \$2 earmarked for DOL.

Free special license plates (including motor vehicle excise tax exemption) which have been issued to disabled veterans, prisoners of war (POWs), the surviving spouses of POWs, and Congressional Medal of Honor recipients may continue to be used on either passenger vehicles or motor homes.

To ensure maximum legibility and reflectivity, DOL must periodically provide for the replacement of license plates.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The restriction that prospective recipients of free special license plates only use them on standard passenger vehicles is eliminated.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Special license plates detract from the purpose of license plates: vehicle identification. Due to the increasing number of special plates, plus the small size of the logos used on them, special license plates have become difficult for law enforcement to decipher. Periodic replacement of license plates will ensure visibility.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Representative Robertson, prime sponsor; Bob Sauter, Veterans; John Lee, Veteran Affairs; Bill Hanson, WA State Patrol Trooper Association; Marsh Pugh, WSP.