
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5643

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2003 Regular Session

By Senate Committee on Highways & Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Esser, Haugen, Horn, Brandland, Prentice, Swecker and Reardon)

READ FIRST TIME 03/10/03.

1 AN ACT Relating to digitally printed license plates; amending RCW
2 46.16.230, 46.16.233, and 46.01.140; adding new sections to chapter
3 46.16 RCW; and creating new sections.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 46.16.230 and 1992 c 7 s 41 are each amended to read
6 as follows:

7 (1) The director shall furnish to all persons making satisfactory
8 application for vehicle license as provided by law, two identical
9 vehicle license number plates each containing the vehicle license
10 number to be displayed on such vehicle as by law required: PROVIDED,
11 That if the vehicle to be licensed is a trailer, semitrailer or
12 motorcycle only one vehicle license number plate shall be issued for
13 each thereof. The number and plate shall be of such size and color and
14 shall contain such symbols indicative of the registration period for
15 which the same is issued and of the state of Washington, as shall be
16 determined and prescribed by the director. Any vehicle license number
17 plate or plates issued to a dealer shall contain thereon a sufficient
18 and satisfactory indication that such plates have been issued to a
19 dealer in vehicles. All vehicle license number plates may be obtained

1 by the director from the metal working plant of a state correctional
2 facility or from any source in accordance with existing state of
3 Washington purchasing procedures.

4 (2) Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this section, the
5 director may, in his discretion and under such rules and regulations as
6 he may prescribe, adopt a type of vehicle license number plates whereby
7 the same shall be used as long as legible on the vehicle for which
8 issued, with provision for tabs or emblems to be attached thereto or
9 elsewhere on the vehicle to signify renewals, in which event the term
10 "vehicle license number plate" as used in any enactment shall be deemed
11 to include in addition to such plate the tab or emblem signifying
12 renewal except when such plate contains the designation of the current
13 year without reference to any tab or emblem. Renewals shall be
14 effected by the issuance and display of such tab or emblem.

15 (3) The department shall implement a flat, digitally printed
16 license plate system that must be used to manufacture all license
17 plates issued under this chapter. This system must be in place and
18 operational by July 1, 2004, and must be used to produce all license
19 plates issued by the department by no later than December 31, 2004.

20 **Sec. 2.** RCW 46.16.233 and 2000 c 37 s 1 are each amended to read
21 as follows:

22 (1) Except for those license plates issued under RCW 46.16.305(1)
23 before January 1, 1987, under RCW 46.16.305(3), and to commercial
24 vehicles with a gross weight in excess of twenty-six thousand pounds,
25 effective with vehicle registrations due or to become due on January 1,
26 2001, the appearance of all vehicle license plates must be ((issued on
27 a standard background)) legible and clearly identifiable as a
28 Washington state license plate, as designated by the department.

29 (2) Additionally, to ensure maximum legibility and reflectivity,
30 the department shall periodically provide for the replacement of
31 license plates, except for commercial vehicles with a gross weight in
32 excess of twenty-six thousand pounds. Frequency of replacement shall
33 be established in accordance with empirical studies documenting the
34 longevity of the reflective materials used to make license plates.

35 (3) In providing for the periodic replacement of license plates,
36 the department shall offer to vehicle owners the option of retaining
37 their current license plate numbers. The department shall charge a

1 retention fee of twenty dollars if this option is exercised. Revenue
2 generated from the retention fee must be deposited into the license
3 plate technology account created under section 4 of this act until such
4 time as the financing necessary to implement a digital license plate
5 system has been paid in full. After the financing has been paid in
6 full, the revenue collected under this section shall be deposited into
7 the multimodal transportation account.

8 **Sec. 3.** RCW 46.01.140 and 2001 c 331 s 1 are each amended to read
9 as follows:

10 (1) The county auditor, if appointed by the director of licensing
11 shall carry out the provisions of this title relating to the licensing
12 of vehicles and the issuance of vehicle license number plates under the
13 direction and supervision of the director and may with the approval of
14 the director appoint assistants as special deputies and recommend
15 subagents to accept applications and collect fees for vehicle licenses
16 and transfers and to deliver vehicle license number plates.

17 (2) A county auditor appointed by the director may request that the
18 director appoint subagencies within the county.

19 (a) Upon authorization of the director, the auditor shall use an
20 open competitive process including, but not limited to, a written
21 business proposal and oral interview to determine the qualifications of
22 all interested applicants.

23 (b) A subagent may recommend a successor who is either the
24 subagent's sibling, spouse, or child, or a subagency employee, as long
25 as the recommended successor participates in the open, competitive
26 process used to select an applicant. In making successor
27 recommendation and appointment determinations, the following provisions
28 apply:

29 (i) If a subagency is held by a partnership or corporate entity,
30 the nomination must be submitted on behalf of, and agreed to by, all
31 partners or corporate officers.

32 (ii) No subagent may receive any direct or indirect compensation or
33 remuneration from any party or entity in recognition of a successor
34 nomination. A subagent may not receive any financial benefit from the
35 transfer or termination of an appointment.

36 (iii) (a) and (b) of this subsection are intended to assist in the

1 efficient transfer of appointments in order to minimize public
2 inconvenience. They do not create a proprietary or property interest
3 in the appointment.

4 (c) The auditor shall submit all proposals to the director, and
5 shall recommend the appointment of one or more subagents who have
6 applied through the open competitive process. The auditor shall
7 include in his or her recommendation to the director, not only the name
8 of the successor who is a relative or employee, if applicable and if
9 otherwise qualified, but also the name of one other applicant who is
10 qualified and was chosen through the open competitive process. The
11 director has final appointment authority.

12 (3)(a) A county auditor who is appointed as an agent by the
13 department shall enter into a standard contract provided by the
14 director, developed with the advice of the title and registration
15 advisory committee.

16 (b) A subagent appointed under subsection (2) of this section shall
17 enter into a standard contract with the county auditor, developed with
18 the advice of the title and registration advisory committee. The
19 director shall provide the standard contract to county auditors.

20 (c) The contracts provided for in (a) and (b) of this subsection
21 must contain at a minimum provisions that:

22 (i) Describe the responsibilities, and where applicable, the
23 liability, of each party relating to the service expectations and
24 levels, equipment to be supplied by the department, and equipment
25 maintenance;

26 (ii) Require the specific type of insurance or bonds so that the
27 state is protected against any loss of collected motor vehicle tax
28 revenues or loss of equipment;

29 (iii) Specify the amount of training that will be provided by the
30 state, the county auditor, or subagents;

31 (iv) Describe allowable costs that may be charged to vehicle
32 licensing activities as provided for in (d) of this subsection;

33 (v) Describe the causes and procedures for termination of the
34 contract, which may include mediation and binding arbitration.

35 (d) The department shall develop procedures that will standardize
36 and prescribe allowable costs that may be assigned to vehicle licensing
37 and vessel registration and title activities performed by county
38 auditors.

1 (e) The contracts may include any provision that the director deems
2 necessary to ensure acceptable service and the full collection of
3 vehicle and vessel tax revenues.

4 (f) The director may waive any provisions of the contract deemed
5 necessary in order to ensure that readily accessible service is
6 provided to the citizens of the state.

7 (4)(a) At any time any application is made to the director, the
8 county auditor, or other agent pursuant to any law dealing with
9 licenses, registration, or the right to operate any vehicle or vessel
10 upon the public highways or waters of this state, excluding applicants
11 already paying such fee under RCW 46.16.070 or 46.16.085, the applicant
12 shall pay to the director, county auditor, or other agent a fee of
13 three dollars for each application in addition to any other fees
14 required by law.

15 (b) Counties that do not cover the expenses of vehicle licensing
16 and vessel registration and title activities may submit to the
17 department a request for cost-coverage moneys. The request must be
18 submitted on a form developed by the department. The department shall
19 develop procedures to verify whether a request is reasonable. Payment
20 shall be made on requests found to be allowable from the licensing
21 services account.

22 (c) Applicants for certificates of ownership, including applicants
23 paying fees under RCW 46.16.070 or 46.16.085, shall pay to the
24 director, county auditor, or other agent a fee of four dollars in
25 addition to any other fees required by law.

26 (d) The fees under (a) and (c) of this subsection, if paid to the
27 county auditor as agent of the director, or if paid to a subagent of
28 the county auditor, shall be paid to the county treasurer in the same
29 manner as other fees collected by the county auditor and credited to
30 the county current expense fund. If the fee is paid to another agent
31 of the director, the fee shall be used by the agent to defray his or
32 her expenses in handling the application.

33 (e) Applicants required to pay the three-dollar fee established
34 under (a) of this subsection, must pay an additional ~~((fifty cents))~~
35 dollar, which must be collected and remitted to the state treasurer
36 ~~((for deposit))~~ and distributed as follows:

37 (i) Fifty cents must be deposited into the department of licensing
38 services account of the motor vehicle fund ~~((. Revenue deposited into~~

1 ~~this account~~) and must be used for agent and subagent support, which
2 is to include but not be limited to the replacement of department-owned
3 equipment in the possession of agents and subagents.

4 (ii) Fifty cents must be deposited into the license plate
5 technology account created under section 4 of this act.

6 (5) A subagent shall collect a service fee of (a) eight dollars and
7 fifty cents for changes in a certificate of ownership, with or without
8 registration renewal, or verification of record and preparation of an
9 affidavit of lost title other than at the time of the title application
10 or transfer and (b) three dollars and fifty cents for registration
11 renewal only, issuing a transit permit, or any other service under this
12 section.

13 (6) If the fee is collected by the state patrol as agent for the
14 director, the fee so collected shall be certified to the state
15 treasurer and deposited to the credit of the state patrol highway
16 account. If the fee is collected by the department of transportation
17 as agent for the director, the fee shall be certified to the state
18 treasurer and deposited to the credit of the motor vehicle fund. All
19 such fees collected by the director or branches of his office shall be
20 certified to the state treasurer and deposited to the credit of the
21 highway safety fund.

22 (7) Any county revenues that exceed the cost of providing vehicle
23 licensing and vessel registration and title activities in a county,
24 calculated in accordance with the procedures in subsection (3)(d) of
25 this section, shall be expended as determined by the county legislative
26 authority during the process established by law for adoption of county
27 budgets.

28 (8) The director may adopt rules to implement this section.

29 NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. A new section is added to chapter 46.16 RCW
30 to read as follows:

31 The license plate technology account is created in the state
32 treasury. All receipts collected under RCW 46.01.140(4)(e)(ii) must be
33 deposited into this account. Expenditures from this account must
34 support current and future license plate technology and systems
35 integration upgrades for both the department and correctional
36 industries. Moneys in the account may be spent only after

1 appropriation. Additionally, the moneys in this account may be used to
2 reimburse the motor vehicle account for any appropriation made to
3 implement the digital license plate system.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 46.16 RCW
5 to read as follows:

6 The department shall offer license plate design services to
7 organizations that are sponsoring a new special license plate series or
8 are seeking to redesign the appearance of an existing special license
9 plate series that they sponsored. In providing this service, the
10 department must work with the requesting organization in determining
11 the specific qualities of the new plate design and must provide full
12 design services to the organization. The department shall collect from
13 the requesting organization a fee of one thousand five hundred dollars
14 for providing license plate design services. This fee includes one
15 original license plate design and up to five additional renditions of
16 the original design. If the organization requests the department to
17 provide further renditions, in addition to the five renditions provided
18 for under the original fee, the department shall collect an additional
19 fee of five hundred dollars per rendition. All revenue collected under
20 this section must be deposited into the license plate technology
21 account created under section 4 of this act until such time as the
22 financing necessary to implement a digital license plate system has
23 been paid in full. After the financing has been paid in full, the
24 revenue collected under this section shall be deposited into the public
25 safety education account for the purpose of providing funding for the
26 crime victims compensation program established under chapter 7.68 RCW.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Sections 2 and 3 of this act take effect for
28 renewals that are due or become due on or after November 1, 2003.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** If this act is not referenced by bill or
30 chapter number by June 30, 2003, in the omnibus transportation
31 appropriations act, this act is null and void.

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