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SENATE BILL 5643

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State of Washington

58th Legislature

2003 Regular Session

By Senators Esser, Haugen, Horn, Brandland, Prentice, Swecker and Reardon

Read first time 02/04/2003. Referred to Committee on Highways & Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to digitally printed license plates; amending RCW  
2 46.16.230, 46.16.233, and 46.16.0621; and adding new sections to  
3 chapter 46.16 RCW.

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 January 1, 2004, and the system must be used to produce  
19 all license plates issued under this chapter by no later than July 1,  
20 2011. The digitally printed license plates may also include bar codes  
21 to facilitate distribution and inventory control.

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

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

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

36 (3) In providing for the periodic replacement of license plates,  
37 the department shall offer the vehicle's owner the option of retaining

1 the current license plate number. The department shall charge a  
2 retention fee of twenty dollars if this option is exercised. Revenue  
3 generated from the retention fee will be deposited into the multimodal  
4 transportation account.

5 **Sec. 3.** RCW 46.16.0621 and 2002 c 352 s 7 are each amended to read  
6 as follows:

7 (1) License tab fees shall be thirty dollars and twenty-five cents  
8 per year for all vehicles.

9 (2) For the purposes of this section, "license tab fees" are  
10 defined as the general fees paid annually for licensing motor vehicles  
11 and trailers as defined in RCW 46.04.620 and 46.04.623. Trailers  
12 licensed under RCW 46.16.068 or 46.16.085 and campers licensed under  
13 RCW 46.16.505 are not required to pay license tab fees under this  
14 section.

15 (3) Twenty-five cents of the fee collected under subsection (1) of  
16 this section must be deposited into the license plate technology  
17 account created under section 4 of this act.

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

20 The license plate technology account is created in the state  
21 treasury. All receipts collected under RCW 46.16.0621(3) must be  
22 deposited into this account. Expenditures from this account must  
23 support current and future license plate technology and systems  
24 integration upgrades. Moneys in the account may be spent only after  
25 appropriation.

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

28 The department shall offer license plate design services to  
29 organizations who are sponsoring a new special license plate series or  
30 who are seeking to redesign the appearance of an existing special  
31 license plate series that they sponsored. In providing this service,  
32 the department must work with the requesting organization in  
33 determining the specific qualities of the new plate design and must  
34 provide full design services to the organization. The department shall  
35 collect from the requesting organization a fee of one thousand five

1 hundred dollars for providing license plate design services. This fee  
2 includes one original license plate design and up to five additional  
3 renditions of the original design. If the organization requests the  
4 department to provide further renditions, in addition to the five  
5 renditions provided for under the original fee, the department shall  
6 collect an additional fee of five hundred dollars per rendition. All  
7 revenue collected under this section must be deposited into the  
8 multimodal transportation account.

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