
Transportation Committee

HB 1946

Brief Description: Concerning special parking privileges for persons with disabilities.

Sponsors: Representatives Hunt and Reykdal.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that parking placards issued to persons with disabilities include a serial number and expiration date, and that the face of such placards is fully displayed when a vehicle is using special parking privileges for persons with disabilities.
- Clarifies the definitions of "unauthorized use" and "illegal obtainment" of a parking placard or special license plate issued to a person with a disability.
- Directs the Department of Licensing to convene a work group to examine the use of special parking privileges for persons with disabilities, and develop a strategic plan to end any abuse of such parking privileges.

Hearing Date: 2/27/13

Staff: Andrew Russell (786-7143).

Background:

Washington law provides for special parking privileges for persons with disabilities. Qualifying disabilities include a limited ability to walk, the use of portable oxygen, impaired breathing or cardiovascular function, an acute sensitivity to automobile emissions, impaired vision, or a sensitivity to light. To establish such a disability, an applicant must receive a determination by a qualifying medical professional, such as a licensed physician. Providing false information on an application for special parking privileges is a gross misdemeanor. Organizations may also apply for special parking privileges, including public transportation authorities, assisted living facilities, private nonprofit corporations, and registered cabulance companies.

Any person who qualifies for special parking privileges under this section must receive an identification card, and may receive special parking placards, a special parking license plate, or

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both. These parking placards and special license plates must be displayed on the motor vehicle, entitling persons with disabilities to park in reserved spaces. Additionally, any qualified holder of these parking placards or a special license plate may park free of charge in public parking areas. Parking placards and the identification card must be returned to the Department of Licensing (DOL) upon the placard holder's death.

It is an infraction, however, for a person to park in a space reserved for persons with physical disabilities without displaying the proper plate or placard or to block the access aisle located next to a space reserved for persons with physical disabilities. Any unauthorized use of a parking placard, special license plate, or identification card is also an infraction. Each of these infractions carries a total penalty of \$450. Finally, it is an infraction, carrying a penalty of \$250, to illegally obtain a parking placard, special license plate, or identification card.

These parking privileges must be renewed at least every five years.

Summary of Bill:

Parking placards issued by the DOL must include a serial number and an expiration date, both of which must be clearly visible from a distance of 10 feet, on the face of the placard. Additionally, it is a traffic infraction for a person to fail to display the full face of such a placard when parked in a space reserved for persons with disabilities. This infraction carries a total penalty of \$450.

The definition of "unauthorized use" is clarified to include using a parking placard that is expired or counterfeit. "Unauthorized use" also includes using a parking placard or special license plate of an initial holder who is no longer eligible to use the plate or placard. Similarly, the definition of "illegal obtainment" is clarified to include making misrepresentations to a medical professional in order to obtain a parking placard or special license plate, stealing such a parking placard or special license plate, and using use the parking placard or special license plate issued to another, even if permitted by the holder, unless it is being used to transport the person to whom the parking placard or special license plate was issued.

Finally, the DOL is directed to establish a work group in order to examine the use of parking placards and special license plates for persons with disabilities. The work group is tasked with developing a strategic plan to end any abuse of these privileges. This plan must include oversight measures that include a random sample program through which a number of parking placard and special license plate issuances are reviewed to confirm that the issuance was proper. Additionally, the plan must include a publicly accessible website on which the validity of parking placards may be checked. Finally, the work group must provide to the Legislature its strategic plan, findings, recommendations, and draft legislation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 22, 2013.

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