
HOUSE BILL 2397

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By Representatives Seaquist, MacEwen, Orwall, Ryu, Morrell, Zeiger, Haler, Tarleton, and Pollet

Read first time 01/16/14. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to Medal of Honor special license plates; and
2 amending RCW 46.18.230, 46.16A.200, and 46.18.277.

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

4 **Sec. 1.** RCW 46.18.230 and 2011 c 332 s 5 are each amended to read
5 as follows:

6 (1) A registered owner who has been awarded the ~~((Congressional))~~
7 Medal of Honor may apply to the department for special license plates
8 for use on ~~((a))~~ up to three motor vehicles required to display one or
9 two license plates, excluding vehicles registered under chapter 46.87
10 RCW, upon terms and conditions established by the department. The
11 ~~((Congressional))~~ Medal of Honor recipient must:

12 (a) Provide proof from the Washington state department of veterans
13 affairs showing receipt of the medal; and

14 (b) Be recorded as the registered owner of the motor vehicle on
15 which the ~~((Congressional))~~ Medal of Honor license plate or plates will
16 be displayed.

17 (2) ~~((Congressional))~~ Medal of Honor license plates must be issued:

18 (a) ~~((Only))~~ For ((a)) up to three personal motor vehicles owned by

1 a person(~~s~~) who (~~have~~) has received the (~~Congressional~~) Medal of
2 Honor; and

3 (b) Without payment of vehicle license fees, license plate fees,
4 and motor vehicle excise taxes.

5 (3) (~~Congressional~~) Medal of Honor license plates must be
6 replaced, free of charge, if the license plates become lost, stolen,
7 damaged, defaced, or destroyed.

8 (4) A (~~Congressional~~) Medal of Honor license plate or plates may
9 be transferred, free of charge, from one motor vehicle to another motor
10 vehicle owned by the (~~Congressional~~) Medal of Honor recipient upon
11 application to the department, county auditor or other agent, or
12 subagent appointed by the director.

13 **Sec. 2.** RCW 46.16A.200 and 2011 c 171 s 46 are each amended to
14 read as follows:

15 (1) **Design.** All license plates may be obtained by the director
16 from the metal working plant of a state correctional facility or from
17 any source in accordance with existing state of Washington purchasing
18 procedures. License plates:

19 (a) May vary in background, color, and design;

20 (b) Must be legible and clearly identifiable as a Washington state
21 license plate;

22 (c) Must designate the name of the state of Washington without
23 abbreviation;

24 (d) Must be treated with fully reflectorized materials designed to
25 increase visibility and legibility at night;

26 (e) Must be of a size and color and show the registration period as
27 determined by the director; and

28 (f) Before July 1, 2010, may display a symbol or artwork approved
29 by the former special license plate review board and the legislature.
30 Beginning July 1, 2010, special license plate series approved by the
31 department and enacted into law by the legislature may display a symbol
32 or artwork approved by the department.

33 (2) **Exceptions to reflectorized materials.** License plates issued
34 before January 1, 1968, are not required to be treated with
35 reflectorized materials.

36 (3) **Dealer license plates.** License plates issued to a dealer must

1 contain an indication that the license plates have been issued to a
2 vehicle dealer.

3 (4)(a) **Furnished.** The director shall furnish to all persons making
4 satisfactory application for a vehicle registration:

5 (i) Two identical license plates each containing the license plate
6 number; or

7 (ii) One license plate if the vehicle is a trailer, semitrailer,
8 camper, moped, collector vehicle, horseless carriage, or motorcycle.

9 (b) The director may adopt types of license plates to be used as
10 long as the license plates are legible.

11 (5)(a) **Display.** License plates must be:

12 (i) Attached conspicuously at the front and rear of each vehicle if
13 two license plates have been issued;

14 (ii) Attached to the rear of the vehicle if one license plate has
15 been issued;

16 (iii) Kept clean and be able to be plainly seen and read at all
17 times; and

18 (iv) Attached in a horizontal position at a distance of not more
19 than four feet from the ground.

20 (b) The Washington state patrol may grant exceptions to this
21 subsection if the body construction of the vehicle makes compliance
22 with this section impossible.

23 (6) **Change of license classification.** A person who has altered a
24 vehicle that makes the current license plate or plates invalid for the
25 vehicle's use shall:

26 (a) Surrender the current license plate or plates to the
27 department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the
28 director;

29 (b) Apply for a new license plate or plates; and

30 (c) Pay a change of classification fee required under RCW
31 46.17.310.

32 (7) **Unlawful acts.** It is unlawful to:

33 (a) Display a license plate or plates on the front or rear of any
34 vehicle that were not issued by the director for the vehicle;

35 (b) Display a license plate or plates on any vehicle that have been
36 changed, altered, or disfigured, or have become illegible;

37 (c) Use holders, frames, or other materials that change, alter, or
38 make a license plate or plates illegible. License plate frames may be

1 used on license plates only if the frames do not obscure license tabs
2 or identifying letters or numbers on the plates and the license plates
3 can be plainly seen and read at all times;

4 (d) Operate a vehicle unless a valid license plate or plates are
5 attached as required under this section;

6 (e) Transfer a license plate or plates issued under this chapter
7 between two or more vehicles without first making application to
8 transfer the license plates. A violation of this subsection (7)(e) is
9 a traffic infraction subject to a fine not to exceed five hundred
10 dollars. Any law enforcement agency that determines that a license
11 plate or plates have been transferred between two or more vehicles
12 shall confiscate the license plate or plates and return them to the
13 department for nullification along with full details of the reasons for
14 confiscation. Each vehicle identified in the transfer will be issued
15 a new license plate or plates upon application by the owner or owners
16 and the payment of full fees and taxes; or

17 (f) Fail, neglect, or refuse to endorse the registration
18 certificate and deliver the license plate or plates to the purchaser or
19 transferee of the vehicle, except as authorized under this section.

20 (8) **Transfer.** (a) Standard issue license plates follow the vehicle
21 when ownership of the vehicle changes unless the registered owner
22 wishes to retain the license plates and transfer them to a replacement
23 vehicle of the same use. A registered owner wishing to keep standard
24 issue license plates shall pay the license plate transfer fee required
25 under RCW 46.17.200(1)(c) when applying for license plate transfer.

26 (b) Special license plates and personalized license plates may be
27 treated in the same manner as described in (a) of this subsection
28 unless otherwise limited by law.

29 (c) License plates issued to the state or any county, city, town,
30 school district, or other political subdivision entitled to exemption
31 as provided by law may be treated in the same manner as described in
32 (a) of this subsection.

33 (9) **Replacement.** (a) An owner or the owner's authorized
34 representative shall apply for a replacement license plate or plates if
35 the current license plate or plates assigned to the vehicle have been
36 lost, defaced, or destroyed, or if one or both plates have become so
37 illegible or are in such a condition as to be difficult to distinguish.

1 An owner or the owner's authorized representative may apply for a
2 replacement license plate or plates at any time the owner chooses.

3 (b) The application for a replacement license plate or plates must:

4 (i) Be on a form furnished or approved by the director; and

5 (ii) Be accompanied by the fee required under RCW 46.17.200(1)(a).

6 (c) The department shall not require the payment of any fee to
7 replace a license plate or plates for vehicles owned, rented, or leased
8 by foreign countries or international bodies to which the United States
9 government is a signatory by treaty.

10 (10) **Periodic replacement.** License plates must be replaced
11 periodically to ensure maximum legibility and reflectivity. The
12 department shall:

13 (a) Use empirical studies documenting the longevity of the
14 reflective materials used to make license plates;

15 (b) Determine how frequently license plates must be replaced; and

16 (c) Offer to owners the option of retaining the current license
17 plate number when obtaining replacement license plates for the fee
18 required in RCW 46.17.200(1)(b).

19 (11) **Periodic replacement--Exceptions.** The following license
20 plates are not required to be periodically replaced as required in
21 subsection (10) of this section:

22 (a) Horseless carriage license plates issued under RCW 46.18.255
23 before January 1, 1987;

24 (b) (~~Congressional~~) Medal of Honor license plates issued under
25 RCW 46.18.230;

26 (c) License plates for commercial motor vehicles with a gross
27 weight greater than twenty-six thousand pounds.

28 (12) **Rules.** The department may adopt rules to implement this
29 section.

30 (13) **Tabs or emblems.** The director may issue tabs or emblems to be
31 attached to license plates or elsewhere on the vehicle to signify
32 initial registration and renewals. Renewals become effective when tabs
33 or emblems have been issued and properly displayed on license plates.

34 **Sec. 3.** RCW 46.18.277 and 2010 c 161 s 627 are each amended to
35 read as follows:

36 (1) A registered owner may purchase personalized license plates

1 with a special license plate background for any vehicle required to
2 display one or two vehicle license plates, excluding:

- 3 (a) Amateur radio license plates;
- 4 (b) Collector vehicle license plates;
- 5 (c) Disabled American veteran license plates;
- 6 (d) Former prisoner of war license plates;
- 7 (e) Horseless carriage license plates;
- 8 (f) (~~Congressional~~) Medal of Honor license plates;
- 9 (g) Military affiliate radio system license plates;
- 10 (h) Pearl Harbor survivor license plates;
- 11 (i) Restored license plates; and
- 12 (j) Vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW.

13 (2) Personalized special license plates issued under this section
14 must:

- 15 (a) Consist of numbers or letters or any combination of numbers or
16 letters;
- 17 (b) Not exceed seven characters; and
- 18 (c) Not contain less than one character.

19 (3) The department may not issue or may refuse to issue
20 personalized special license plates that:

21 (a) Duplicate or conflict with existing or projected vehicle
22 license plate series or other numbering systems for records kept by the
23 department; or

24 (b) May carry connotations offensive to good taste and decency or
25 which would be misleading.

26 (4) Personalized special license plates must be issued only to the
27 registered owner of the vehicle on which they are to be displayed. The
28 registered owner must:

29 (a) Pay both the personalized license plate fee required under RCW
30 46.17.210 and the special license plate fee required under the
31 applicable special license plate provision, in addition to any other
32 fee or taxes due. License plate fees must be distributed as provided
33 in chapter 46.68 RCW;

34 (b) Renew personalized special license plates annually, regardless
35 of whether or not the vehicle on which the personalized special license
36 plates are displayed will be driven on the public highways;

37 (c) Surrender personalized special license plates that have not

1 been renewed to the department. The failure to surrender expired
2 personalized special license plates is a traffic infraction; and

3 (d) Immediately report to the department when personalized special
4 license plates have been transferred to another vehicle or another
5 owner.

6 (5) The department may establish rules as necessary to carry out
7 this section including, but not limited to, identifying the maximum
8 number of positions on personalized special license plates for
9 motorcycles.

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