

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1197

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Transportation, April 2, 2019

Title: An act relating to gold star license plates.

Brief Description: Concerning gold star license plates.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Riccelli, Irwin, Lovick, Barkis, Reeves, Blake, Ortiz-Self, Ormsby, Valdez, Bergquist, Mead, Fey, Volz, Chapman, Pellicciotti, Kilduff, Dolan, Sells, Maycumber, Shea, Griffey, Leavitt and Stanford).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/20/19, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/26/19, 4/02/19 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Requires Gold Star license plates to be issued for certain eligible applicants without payment of any vehicle license fees and motor vehicle excise taxes.
- Allows widows and widowers who are eligible to receive the Gold Star license plates but choose instead to receive a standard license plate or any other qualifying special license plate to be exempt from payment of motor vehicle excise taxes.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Hobbs, Chair; Saldaña, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Sheldon, Assistant Ranking Member; Cleveland, Das, Lovelett, Nguyen, O'Ban, Padden, Randall, Takko, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Staff: Bryon Moore (786-7726)

Background: The Department of Licensing (DOL) issues special vehicle license plates that may be used in lieu of standard license plates. Generally, special license plates are sponsored by a governmental or nonprofit organization and are available to all Washington residents for

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an additional fee that is due annually upon vehicle registration renewal. Other special license plates are available to individuals who meet certain requirements. One such special license plate is the Gold Star license plate, which may be issued to an eligible family member of a member of the United States Armed Forces who died while in service to their country, or as a result of their service.

To qualify for a Gold Star license plate, a registered vehicle owner must:

- be a resident of Washington;
- provide proof to the satisfaction of DOL that they are an eligible family member to the deceased service member;
- provide certification from the Department of Veterans Affairs that they qualify for a Gold Star license plate;
- be recorded as the registered owner of the motor vehicle on which the Gold Star license plates will be displayed; and
- pay all fees and taxes required by law for registering the motor vehicle.

Eligible family members include:

- widows and widowers;
- biological and adoptive parents;
- stepparents;
- adults in loco parentis and foster parents;
- biological and adopted children; and
- siblings.

Gold Star license plates are issued without payment of any license plate fees and are replaced free of charge if a plate is lost, stolen, damaged, defaced, or destroyed. Widow and widower recipients of Gold Star license plates are exempt from annual vehicle registration fees for one personal use motor vehicle. Additionally, in lieu of a Gold Star license plate, a qualifying widow or widower may apply for a standard issue license plate or any qualifying special license plate for one personal use motor vehicle and be exempt from both annual vehicle registration fees and license plate fees for that vehicle.

Gold Star license plates may be transferred from one motor vehicle to another motor vehicle owned by the eligible family member upon application to DOL, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director of DOL.

Summary of Amended Bill: Qualified Gold Star license applicants that are a widow, widower, biological parent, adoptive parent, stepparent, or an adult in loco parentis or foster parent must be issued the plates without any vehicle license fees or motor vehicle excise taxes in addition to the current exemption from payment of license plate fees. The exemption from all the vehicle license fees and motor vehicle excise taxes is limited to one motor vehicle. For biological and adopted children, and sibling Gold Star applicants, current law is maintained. This means that they would be exempt from license plate fees, but not exempt from other vehicle license fees or motor vehicle excise taxes for their Gold Star license.

EFFECT OF TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S): The expansion of the vehicle license fees and motor vehicle excise tax exemption is limited to a widow, widower, biological parent, adoptive parent, stepparent, or an adult in loco parentis or foster

parent Gold Star license applicants. Clarifying language is added that limits the fee exemption provisions to one motor vehicle. For biological and adopted children, and sibling applicants, current law is maintained, which means that they would be exempt from license plate fees, but not exempt from other vehicle license fees or motor vehicle excise taxes for their Gold Star license.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Substitute House Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: This expansion is designed to honor the sacrifice of our fallen heroes and support the Gold Star families. Being recognized as a result of having the Gold Star plates is another way to remember our loved ones. This legislation is also partially about clarifying the commitment to those that have given the ultimate sacrifice. This is a small token to show our gratitude.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Marcus Riccelli, Prime Sponsor; Myra Rintamaki, American Gold Star Mothers of Washington State; Charlene Hawley, Gold Star mom; Shirley Schmunk, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.