

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1488

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to creating special license plates that support working forests.

Brief Description: Creating special license plates that support working forests.

Sponsors: Representatives Orcutt, Chapman, Dent, Griffey, Couture and Reeves.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/1/23, 2/9/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Working Forests special license plate.
- Establishes original and renewal fees for the special license plate.
- Directs proceeds from the special license plate to the Washington Tree Farm Program to support small forest landowners.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 28 members: Representatives Fey, Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Timmons, Vice Chair; Barkis, Ranking Minority Member; Hutchins, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Low, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Robertson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berry, Bronoske, Chapman, Cortes, Dent, Doglio, Duerr, Entenman, Goehner, Griffey, Hackney, Klicker, Mena, Orcutt, Ramel, Ramos, Schmidt, Taylor, Volz and Wylie.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Walsh.

Staff: Michael Hirsch (786-7195).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Background:

The Department of Licensing (DOL) issues special vehicle license plates that may be used in lieu of standard plates. An organization seeking to sponsor a special license plate must be a nonprofit organization, a professional sports franchise working in conjunction with a nonprofit organization, or a government agency. The sponsoring organization may choose one of two ways of creating a special license plate.

Application Process and Legislation. In this method, a sponsoring organization submits an application to the DOL prior to pursuing legislation. The application packet must include the design of the special license plate, proof of 3,500 signatures in support of the special license plate, and the start-up fee of \$6,300. After the DOL approves the application, the sponsoring organization must pursue legislation to create the special license plate.

Legislation Without the Department of Licensing's Review. In this method, a sponsoring organization pursues legislation without applying to the DOL first. Once the bill is enacted, the sponsoring organization must provide the design of the special license plate and the startup fee of \$6,300 to the DOL within 30 days.

In both methods, if the sponsoring organization can prove that they are unable to provide the start-up fee up front, then revenues from the sale of the special license plate will be used to pay this fee. On an annual basis, the sponsoring organization must submit a financial report to the DOL detailing actual revenues from the sale of the special license plate. The DOL compiles these reports and presents them to the transportation committees of the Legislature.

The DOL collects special license plate fees and, for administrative expenses, deducts an amount not to exceed \$12 for new plate issuance and \$2 for renewal. After these expenses are paid, the State Treasurer deposits the proceeds into the Motor Vehicle Account until the DOL determines that the start-up fee for a special license plate is paid. Once the start-up fee is paid, the State Treasurer credits the remaining special license plate fee amounts into an account specified for the sponsoring organization.

Summary of Bill:

The Working Forests special license plate is created. In addition to all fees and taxes required to be paid upon application for a vehicle registration, a fee of \$40 is charged for the original issuance of a Working Forests special license plate, and a \$30 fee is charged for the renewal of the plate. Revenue from the sale of the special license plates will provide funds to the Washington Tree Farm Program to support small forest landowners.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on November 1, 2023.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill creates a special vehicle license plate that supports the Washington Tree Farm Program which helps small forest landowners survive and thrive. Small forest landowners live under forest and fish law. Many small forest landowners live on working forest properties and care about the land. Working forests create jobs and wood products.

The Washington Tree Farm Program helps small forest landowners understand good management practices and look for ways to benefit fish, wildlife, air quality, and carbon sequestration. Washington has a long history of strong and responsible forest management. Forest management is the first green industry and the forests of private landowners sequester greenhouse gases.

The special vehicle license plate supports individuals who manage forests for timber. The special vehicle license plate reflects the fact that humans have a role in managing our forests and creates awareness of the benefits of working forests.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ed Orcutt, prime sponsor; Tom Davis, Washington Forest Protection Association; Elaine Oneil, Washington Farm Forestry Association; Jenny Knoth; and Ken Miller.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.