

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2489

As Passed House:
February 29, 2024

Title: An act relating to creating several new special license plates.

Brief Description: Creating several new special license plates.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Orcutt, Donaghy and Schmidt).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/2/24, 2/5/24 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/29/24, 86-10.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates the Keep Washington Evergreen special license plate, the LeMay-America's Car Museum special license plate, the Mount St. Helens special license plate, the Nautical Northwest special license plate, the Smokey Bear special license plate, and the Working Forests special license plate.
- Establishes both original and renewal fees for the special license plates.
- Directs proceeds from the special license plates for various purposes.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill 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,

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Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Berry, Bronoske, Chapman, Cortes, Dent, Doglio, Duerr, Entenman, Goehner, Griffey, Hackney, Klicker, Mena, Nance, Orcutt, Ramel, Ramos, Schmidt, Volz and Wylie.

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

Staff: Michael Hirsch (786-7195).

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 start-up 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 (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 Treasurer credits the remaining special license plate fee amounts into an account specified for the sponsoring organization.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The LeMay-America's Car Museum special license plate, the Mount St. Helens special license plate, the Smokey Bear special license plate, the Nautical Northwest special license plate, the Keep Washington Evergreen special license plate, and the Working Forests special license plate are 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 one of the special license plates, and a \$30 fee is charged for the renewal of one of the plates. Revenue from the sale of the different special license plates will be distributed as shown in the table below.

License Plate	Recipient of Funds and Purpose
Keep Washington Evergreen	Electric Vehicle Account; for the support of electric charging stations throughout Washington
LeMay-America's Car Museum	For education and job training related to automobiles
Mount St. Helens	The Mount St. Helens Institute; to promote education, stewardship, and science at Mount St. Helens
Nautical Northwest	To support of historic resources of Whidbey Island's maritime communities
Smokey Bear	The Department of Natural Resources wildfire prevention programs
Working Forest	The Washington Tree Farm Program; to support small forest landowners

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on November 1, 2025.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Moving multiple special license plate bills at the same time saves time. The committee has heard all four of these bills and passed three of them out of committee. The bill honors the power and resilience of Mt. St. Helens and the Mt. St. Helens Institute supports efforts to teach youth and adults. The LeMay Car Museum is a phenomenal facility and a license plate will promote the museum. Today, 91 percent of fires are human caused while 30 years ago the number one cause of fire was lightning strikes. Lightning strikes still occur and people need reminders to be careful to prevent forest fires. Smokey Bear is a widely recognized symbol that can change behavior.

This bill shines a light on what small forest landowners and tree farmers do and supports certifying more forests as being under sustainable forest management. Working forests are good for the climate and the economy. Managed forests are resilient and sequester carbon.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ed Orcutt, prime sponsor; Michael Transue, LeMay-America's Car Museum; Brian Considine, Department of Natural Resources; and Jenny Knoth.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.