
ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 2397

State of Washington

63rd Legislature

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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; amending
2 RCW 46.18.230, 46.16A.200, and 46.18.277; and adding a new section to
3 chapter 46.04 RCW.

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

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

7 (1) A registered owner who has been awarded the ((Congressional))
8 Medal of Honor may apply to the department for no more than three
9 special license plate((s)) sets for use on ((a)) no more than three
10 motor vehicles required to display one or two license plates, excluding
11 vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW, upon terms and conditions
12 established by the department. The ((Congressional)) Medal of Honor
13 recipient must:

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

16 (b) Be recorded as one of the registered owners of the motor
17 vehicle on which the ((Congressional)) Medal of Honor license plate or
18 plates will be displayed.

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

1 (a) (~~Only~~) For (~~a~~) no more than three personal motor vehicles
2 owned by a person(~~s~~) who (~~have~~) has received the (~~Congressional~~)
3 Medal of Honor; and

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

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

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

14 (5) A registered owner who is eligible for Medal of Honor license
15 plates may, in lieu of applying for the special license plates under
16 this section, apply for regular issue license plates for no more than
17 three personal motor vehicles owned by the registered owner and receive
18 the full benefit of the vehicle license fee, license plate fee, and
19 motor vehicle excise tax exemptions provided in subsection (2)(b) of
20 this section.

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

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

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

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

30 (c) Must designate the name of the state of Washington without
31 abbreviation;

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

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

36 (f) Before July 1, 2010, may display a symbol or artwork approved
37 by the former special license plate review board and the legislature.

1 Beginning July 1, 2010, special license plate series approved by the
2 department and enacted into law by the legislature may display a symbol
3 or artwork approved by the department.

4 (2) **Exceptions to reflectorized materials.** License plates issued
5 before January 1, 1968, are not required to be treated with
6 reflectorized materials.

7 (3) **Dealer license plates.** License plates issued to a dealer must
8 contain an indication that the license plates have been issued to a
9 vehicle dealer.

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

12 (i) Two identical license plates each containing the license plate
13 number; or

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 (a) Surrender the current license plate or plates to the
34 department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the
35 director;

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

37 (c) Pay a change of classification fee required under RCW
38 46.17.310.

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

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

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

6 (c) Use holders, frames, or other materials that change, alter, or
7 make a license plate or plates illegible. License plate frames may be
8 used on license plates only if the frames do not obscure license tabs
9 or identifying letters or numbers on the plates and the license plates
10 can be plainly seen and read at all times;

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

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

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

27 (8) **Transfer.** (a) Standard issue license plates follow the vehicle
28 when ownership of the vehicle changes unless the registered owner
29 wishes to retain the license plates and transfer them to a replacement
30 vehicle of the same use. A registered owner wishing to keep standard
31 issue license plates shall pay the license plate transfer fee required
32 under RCW 46.17.200(1)(c) when applying for license plate transfer.

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

36 (c) License plates issued to the state or any county, city, town,
37 school district, or other political subdivision entitled to exemption

1 as provided by law may be treated in the same manner as described in
2 (a) of this subsection.

3 (9) **Replacement.** (a) An owner or the owner's authorized
4 representative shall apply for a replacement license plate or plates if
5 the current license plate or plates assigned to the vehicle have been
6 lost, defaced, or destroyed, or if one or both plates have become so
7 illegible or are in such a condition as to be difficult to distinguish.
8 An owner or the owner's authorized representative may apply for a
9 replacement license plate or plates at any time the owner chooses.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

31 (b) ((Congressional)) Medal of Honor license plates issued under
32 RCW 46.18.230;

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

35 (12) **Rules.** The department may adopt rules to implement this
36 section.

37 (13) **Tabs or emblems.** The director may issue tabs or emblems to be

1 attached to license plates or elsewhere on the vehicle to signify
2 initial registration and renewals. Renewals become effective when tabs
3 or emblems have been issued and properly displayed on license plates.

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

6 (1) A registered owner may purchase personalized license plates
7 with a special license plate background for any vehicle required to
8 display one or two vehicle license plates, excluding:

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

19 (2) Personalized special license plates issued under this section
20 must:

- 21 (a) Consist of numbers or letters or any combination of numbers or
22 letters;
23 (b) Not exceed seven characters; and
24 (c) Not contain less than one character.

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

- 27 (a) Duplicate or conflict with existing or projected vehicle
28 license plate series or other numbering systems for records kept by the
29 department; or
30 (b) May carry connotations offensive to good taste and decency or
31 which would be misleading.

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

- 35 (a) Pay both the personalized license plate fee required under RCW
36 46.17.210 and the special license plate fee required under the

1 applicable special license plate provision, in addition to any other
2 fee or taxes due. License plate fees must be distributed as provided
3 in chapter 46.68 RCW;

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

7 (c) Surrender personalized special license plates that have not
8 been renewed to the department. The failure to surrender expired
9 personalized special license plates is a traffic infraction; and

10 (d) Immediately report to the department when personalized special
11 license plates have been transferred to another vehicle or another
12 owner.

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

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 46.04 RCW
18 to read as follows:

19 "Medal of Honor" means the Medal of Honor military decoration
20 presented by the president of the United States, in the name of
21 congress.

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