

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## E2SSB 5700

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### As Reported By House Committee On:

Transportation

**Title:** An act relating to motor vehicle license plates.

**Brief Description:** Replacing old license plates.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Owen, Prince, Heavey, Wood, Kohl and Deccio).

### Brief History:

#### Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/22/96 [DPA].

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 25 members: Representatives K. Schmidt, Chairman; Mitchell, Vice Chairman; Skinner, Vice Chairman; R. Fisher, Ranking Minority Member; Hatfield, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Backlund; Blanton; Brown; Buck; Cairnes; Chandler; Chopp; Elliot; Hankins; Horn; Johnson; McMahan; Ogden; Quall; Robertson; Romero; D. Schmidt; Scott; Sterk and Tokuda.

**Staff:** Jennifer Joly (786-7305).

**Background:** When a license plate is lost, defaced, destroyed or has become so illegible as to be difficult to distinguish, the registered vehicle owner is required to get new license plates. The application for new plates must be accompanied by the certificate of registration and a fee of \$3.50 per plate.

All replacement license plates issued after January 1, 1987, are on the blue mountain background design, which was originally developed for the Washington State Centennial Celebration. In addition to the mountain background plate, Washington State has three other officially designated license plate backgrounds: the white background with green symbols; the lemon yellow personalized plate background; and the red, white, and blue Congressional Medal of Honor background.

Additionally, restored license plates are available for collectors' vehicles that are more than 30 years old. Restored license plates are those which were originally

issued during the vehicle's model year. Generally, restored license plates have white backgrounds with symbols of varying shades of green.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) is authorized to issue special license plates. DOL also has authority to set a fee of up to \$35 for special issuances, but does not have the ability to earmark the fees for specific, nonlicensing purposes.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** Effective with vehicle registrations due or to become due on January 1, 2000, license plates must have a common background. Exemptions from the common background license plate requirement are provided for (1) commercial vehicles as defined in the vehicle inspection statute; (2) vehicles originally licensed before January 1, 1987, that are currently owned by the original licensee; (3) Congressional Medal of Honor license plate holders; and (4) horseless carriage license plate holders.

**Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Second Substitute Bill:** Sections 3 and 4 of the bill are stricken. Those sections, pertaining to special license plates, would (1) have allowed requesting parties to collect additional fees from the sale of special license plates to be earmarked for nonlicensing purposes; and (2) have required that the requesting party pre-pay DOL's costs associated with the first minimum order and maintenance of a minimum inventory of the requested license plate series.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect on January 1, 2000.

**Testimony For:** Law enforcement would prefer a common license plate background for ease in identifying the vehicle's state of origin, especially at night. License plate replacement is warranted for plates issued prior to 1988 because plate reflectivity diminishes over time.

The special license plate sections of the bill should be retained so that a pet population control license plate may go forward. A pet population license plate could raise money to prevent the destruction of animals.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Marsh Pugh, Washington State Patrol; Jeanne Werner, Humane Society; Rosanne Galak, Humane Society; and Lisa Wathne, Progressive Animal Welfare Society.