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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6150**

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**State of Washington**

**63rd Legislature**

**2014 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Bailey, Hobbs, Angel, Benton, Conway, O'Ban, Roach, and McAuliffe)

READ FIRST TIME 02/03/14.

1 AN ACT Relating to Medal of Honor special license plates; and  
2 amending RCW 46.18.230, 46.16A.200, and 46.18.277.

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

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

6 (1) A registered owner who has been awarded the ~~((Congressional))~~  
7 Medal of Honor may apply to the department for special license plates  
8 for use on ~~((a))~~ up to three motor vehicles required to display one or  
9 two license plates, excluding vehicles registered under chapter 46.87  
10 RCW, upon terms and conditions established by the department. The  
11 ~~((Congressional))~~ Medal of Honor recipient must:

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

14 (b) Be recorded as the registered owner of the motor vehicle on  
15 which the ~~((Congressional))~~ Medal of Honor license plate or plates will  
16 be displayed.

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

18 (a) ~~((Only))~~ For ~~((a))~~ up to three personal motor vehicles owned by

1 a person(~~s~~) who (~~have~~) has received the (~~Congressional~~) Medal of  
2 Honor; and

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

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

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

13 (5) A registered owner who is a Medal of Honor recipient may, in  
14 lieu of applying for the special license plates under this section,  
15 apply for regular issue or any qualifying special license plates and  
16 receive the full benefit of the vehicle license fee and excise tax  
17 exemption provided in subsection (2)(b) of this section.

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

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

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

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

27 (c) Must designate the name of the state of Washington without  
28 abbreviation;

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

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

33 (f) Before July 1, 2010, may display a symbol or artwork approved  
34 by the former special license plate review board and the legislature.  
35 Beginning July 1, 2010, special license plate series approved by the  
36 department and enacted into law by the legislature may display a symbol  
37 or artwork approved by the department.

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

4           (3) **Dealer license plates.** License plates issued to a dealer must  
5 contain an indication that the license plates have been issued to a  
6 vehicle dealer.

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

9           (i) Two identical license plates each containing the license plate  
10 number; or

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

30           (a) Surrender the current license plate or plates to the  
31 department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the  
32 director;

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

34           (c) Pay a change of classification fee required under RCW  
35 46.17.310.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 (c) License plates issued to the state or any county, city, town,  
34 school district, or other political subdivision entitled to exemption  
35 as provided by law may be treated in the same manner as described in  
36 (a) of this subsection.

37 (9) **Replacement.** (a) An owner or the owner's authorized  
38 representative shall apply for a replacement license plate or plates if

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

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

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

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

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

13 (10) **Periodic replacement.** License plates must be replaced  
14 periodically to ensure maximum legibility and reflectivity. The  
15 department shall:

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

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

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

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

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

27 (b) (~~Congressional~~) Medal of Honor license plates issued under  
28 RCW 46.18.230;

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

31 (12) **Rules.** The department may adopt rules to implement this  
32 section.

33 (13) **Tabs or emblems.** The director may issue tabs or emblems to be  
34 attached to license plates or elsewhere on the vehicle to signify  
35 initial registration and renewals. Renewals become effective when tabs  
36 or emblems have been issued and properly displayed on license plates.

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

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

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

16           (2) Personalized special license plates issued under this section  
17 must:

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

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

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

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

- 32           (a) Pay both the personalized license plate fee required under RCW  
33 46.17.210 and the special license plate fee required under the  
34 applicable special license plate provision, in addition to any other  
35 fee or taxes due. License plate fees must be distributed as provided  
36 in chapter 46.68 RCW;

- 37           (b) Renew personalized special license plates annually, regardless

1 of whether or not the vehicle on which the personalized special license  
2 plates are displayed will be driven on the public highways;

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

6 (d) Immediately report to the department when personalized special  
7 license plates have been transferred to another vehicle or another  
8 owner.

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

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