Chapter 46.18 RCW
SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES

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GENERAL PROVISIONS

RCW 46.18.005 Intent. The legislature has seen an increase in the demand from constituent groups seeking recognition and funding through the establishment of commemorative or special license plates. The high cost of implementing a new special license plate series coupled with the uncertainty of the state's ability to recoup its costs has led the legislature to delay the implementation of new special license plates. In order to address these issues, it is the

intent of the legislature to create a mechanism that will allow for the evaluation of special license plate requests and establish a funding policy that will alleviate the financial burden currently placed on the state. Using these two strategies, the legislature will be better equipped to efficiently process special license plate legislation. [2010 c 161 s 601; 2003 c 196 s 1. Formerly RCW 46.16.700.]

Reviser's note: 2010 c 161 s 1226 directed that RCW 46.16.700 be recodified under the subchapter heading "review board" under chapter 46.18 RCW. However, recodification under the subchapter heading "general provisions" appears to be more appropriate.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Part headings not law—2003 c 196: "Part headings used in this act are not part of the law." [2003 c 196 s 601.]

RCW 46.18.010 Application. Persons applying to the department for special license plates shall apply on forms obtained from the department and in accordance with RCW 46.16A.040. The applicant shall provide all information as is required by the department in order to determine the applicant's eligibility for the special license plates. [2011 c 171 s 63; 1997 c 291 s 7; 1990 c 250 s 3. Formerly RCW 46.16.309.]

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective dates—1990 c 250 ss 1-13: See note following RCW 10.05.060.

RCW 46.18.020 Rules. The director shall adopt rules to implement this chapter, including the setting of fees. [2011 c 171 s 64; 2010 c 161 s 631; 1990 c 250 s 10. Formerly RCW 46.16.335.]

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Effective dates—1990 c 250 ss 1-13: See note following RCW 10.05.060.

REVIEW, REQUIREMENTS, AND PROCEDURES

RCW 46.18.050 Department duties—Applications, financial reports. The department shall:

(1) Process special license plate applications and confirm that the sponsoring organization has submitted all required documentation. If an incomplete application is received, the department must return it to the sponsoring organization; and

(2) Compile the annual financial reports submitted by sponsoring organizations with active special license plate series. [2011 c 171 s 65. Prior: 2010 1st sp.s. c 7 s 93; 2010 c 161 s 603; 2005 c 319 s 118; 2003 c 196 s 102. Formerly RCW 46.16.715.]

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Findings—Intent—Part headings—Effective dates—2005 c 319: See notes following RCW 43.17.020.

Part headings not law—2003 c 196: See note following RCW 46.18.005.

RCW 46.18.060 Department duties continued. (1) The department must review and either approve or reject special license plate applications submitted by sponsoring organizations. Except for special license plates created under chapter 385, Laws of 2025, the department may not issue any new special license plates until January 1, 2029, and therefore no applications for any new special license plates may be accepted until January 1, 2029. The department must prominently display this special license plate moratorium on its website.

(2) Duties of the department include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) Review and approve the annual financial reports submitted by sponsoring organizations with active special license plate series and present those annual financial reports to the joint transportation committee;

(b) Report annually to the joint transportation committee on the special license plate applications that were considered by the department;

(c) Issue approval and rejection notification letters to sponsoring organizations, the executive committee of the joint transportation committee, and the legislative sponsors identified in each application. The letters must be issued within seven days of making a determination on the status of an application; and

(d) Review annually the number of plates sold for each special license plate series created after January 1, 2003. The department may submit a recommendation to discontinue a special plate series to the executive committee of the joint transportation committee. [2025 c 385 s 1; 2017 3rd sp.s. c 25 s 40. Prior: 2016 c 36 s 4; 2016 c 16 s 4; 2016 c 15 s 4; prior: 2014 c 77 s 5; 2014 c 6 s 4; prior: 2013 c 306 s 703; 2013 c 286 s 5; 2012 c 65 s 6; prior: 2011 c 367 s 703; 2011 c 229 s 5; 2011 c 225 s 4; 2011 c 171 s 66; prior: 2010 1st sp.s. c 7 s 94; 2010 c 161 s 604; 2009 c 470 s 710; 2008 c 72 s 2; 2007 c 518 s 711; prior: 2005 c 319 s 119; 2005 c 210 s 7; 2003 c 196 s 103. Formerly RCW 46.16.725.]

Short title—2025 c 385: "This act is known as Bill's bill act." [2025 c 385 s 26.]

Effective date—2016 c 36: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Effective date—2016 c 16: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Effective date—2016 c 15: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Effective date—2014 c 77: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Effective date—2014 c 6: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Effective date—2013 c 306: See note following RCW 47.64.170.

Effective date—2013 c 286: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Effective date—2012 c 65: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Effective date—2011 c 367 ss 703, 704, 716, and 719: "Sections 703, 704, 716, and 719 of this act are necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and take effect July 1, 2011." [2011 c 367 s 1103.]

Effective date—2011 c 229: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Effective date—2011 c 225: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Effective date—2009 c 470: See note following RCW 46.68.170.

Severability—Effective date—2007 c 518: See notes following RCW 46.68.170.

Findings—Intent—Part headings—Effective dates—2005 c 319: See notes following RCW 43.17.020.

Part headings not law—2003 c 196: See note following RCW 46.18.005.

RCW 46.18.100 Sponsoring organization requirements. (1) For an organization to qualify for a special license plate under the special license plate approval program created in this chapter, the sponsoring organization must submit documentation to the department that verifies that the organization is:

(a)(i) A nonprofit organization, as defined in 26 U.S.C. Sec. 501(c)(3). The department may request a copy of an Internal Revenue Service ruling to verify an organization's nonprofit status; and

(ii) Located in Washington state and has registered as a charitable organization with the secretary of state's office as required by law; or

(b)(i) A professional sports franchise located in Washington state; and

(ii) Using the proceeds from a special license plate in conjunction with a nonprofit organization, as defined in 26 U.S.C. Sec. 501(c)(3), solely for the purposes outlined under RCW 46.68.420.

(2) For a governmental body to qualify for a special license plate under the special license plate approval program created in this chapter, a governmental body must be:

(a) A political subdivision including, but not limited to, any county, city, town, municipal corporation, or special purpose taxing district that has the express permission of the political subdivision's executive body to sponsor a special license plate;

(b) A federally recognized tribal government that has received the approval of the executive body of that government to sponsor a special license plate;

(c) A state agency that has received approval from the director of the agency or the department head; or

(d) A community or technical college that has the express permission of the college's board of trustees to sponsor a special license plate. [2013 c 286 s 4; 2010 c 161 s 605; 2004 c 222 s 3; 2003 c 196 s 201. Formerly RCW 46.16.735.]

Effective date—2013 c 286: See note following RCW 46.18.200.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session —2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Part headings not law—2003 c 196: See note following RCW 46.18.005.

RCW 46.18.110 Application requirements. (1) A sponsoring organization meeting the requirements of RCW 46.18.100, applying for the creation of a special license plate must, on an application supplied by the department, provide the minimum application requirements in subsection (2) of this section.

(2) The sponsoring organization shall:

(a) Submit prepayment of all start-up costs associated with the creation and implementation of the special license plate in an amount determined by the department. The department shall place this money into the special license plate applicant trust account created under RCW 46.68.380;

(b) Provide a proposed license plate design;

(c) Provide a marketing strategy outlining short and long-term marketing plans for each special license plate and a financial analysis outlining the anticipated revenue and the planned expenditures of the revenues derived from the sale of the special license plate;

(d) Provide a signature of a legislative sponsor and proposed legislation creating the special license plate;

(e) Provide proof of organizational qualifications as determined by the department as provided for in RCW 46.18.100;

(f) Provide signature sheets that include signatures from individuals who intend to purchase the special license plate and the number of plates each individual intends to purchase. The sheets must reflect a minimum of three thousand five hundred intended purchases of the special license plate.

(3) After an application is approved by the department, the application need not be reviewed again for a period of three years. [2011 c 171 s 67. Prior: 2010 1st sp.s. c 7 s 95; 2010 c 161 s 606; 2005 c 210 s 8; 2003 c 196 s 301. Formerly RCW 46.16.745.]

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Part headings not law—2003 c 196: See note following RCW 46.18.005.

RCW 46.18.120 Written agreement—Financial report. (1) Within thirty days of legislative enactment of a new special license plate series for a qualifying organization meeting the requirements of RCW 46.18.100(1), the department shall enter into a written agreement with the organization that sponsored the special license plate. The agreement must identify the services to be performed by the sponsoring organization. The agreement must be consistent with all applicable state law and include the following provision:

"No portion of any funds disbursed under the agreement may be used, directly or indirectly, for any of the following purposes:

(a) Attempting to influence: (i) The passage or defeat of legislation by the legislature of the state of Washington, by a county, city, town, or other political subdivision of the state of Washington, or by the Congress; or (ii) the adoption or rejection of a rule, standard, rate, or other legislative enactment of a state agency;

(b) Making contributions reportable under *chapter 42.17 RCW; or

(c) Providing a: (i) Gift; (ii) honoraria; or (iii) travel, lodging, meals, or entertainment to a public officer or employee."

(2) The sponsoring organization must submit an annual financial report by September 30th of each year to the department detailing actual revenues and expenditures of the revenues received from sales of the special license plate. Consistent with the agreement under subsection (1) of this section, the sponsoring organization must expend the revenues generated from the sale of the special license plate series for the benefit of the public, and it must be spent within this state. Disbursement of the revenue generated from the sale of the special license plate to the sponsoring organization is contingent upon the organization meeting all reporting and review requirements as required by the department.

(3) If the sponsoring organization ceases to exist or the purpose of the special license plate series ceases to exist, revenues generated from the sale of the special license plates must be deposited into the motor vehicle fund created in RCW 46.68.070.

(4) A sponsoring organization may not seek to redesign its special license plate series until the entire inventory is sold or purchased by the organization itself. All costs for the redesign of a special license plate series must be paid by the sponsoring organization. [2010 c 161 s 608; 2003 c 196 s 303. Formerly RCW 46.16.765.]

***Reviser's note:** Provisions in chapter 42.17 RCW relating to campaign disclosure and contribution were recodified in chapter 42.17A RCW by 2010 c 204, effective January 1, 2012. Chapter 42.17A RCW was recodified into Title 29B RCW by 2024 c 164, effective January 1, 2026.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Part headings not law—2003 c 196: See note following RCW 46.18.005.

RCW 46.18.130 Disposition of revenues. (1) Revenues generated from the sale of special license plates for those sponsoring organizations who used the application process in RCW 46.18.110 must be deposited into the motor vehicle fund created in RCW 46.68.070 until the department determines that the state's implementation costs have been fully reimbursed.

(2) When it is determined that the state has been fully reimbursed the department must notify the house of representatives and senate transportation committees, the sponsoring organization, and the state treasurer, and begin distributing the revenue as otherwise provided by law.

(3) If reimbursement does not occur within two years from the date the special license plate is first offered for sale to the public, the special license plate series must be placed in probationary status for a period of one year from that date. If the state is still not fully reimbursed for its implementation costs after the one-year probation, the special license plate series must be discontinued immediately. Special license plates issued before discontinuation are valid until replaced.

(4) The department shall:

(a) Provide the special license plate applicant with a written receipt for the payment; and

(b) Maintain a record of each special license plate applicant trust account deposit including, but not limited to, the name and address of each special license plate applicant whose funds are being deposited, the amount paid, and the date of the deposit.

(5) After the department receives written notice that the special license plate applicant's application has been approved by the legislature, the director shall request that the money be transferred to the motor vehicle fund created in RCW 46.68.070.

(6) After the department receives written notice that the special license plate applicant's application has been denied by the

department or the legislature, the director shall provide a refund to the applicant within thirty days.

(7) After the department receives written notice that the special license plate applicant's application has been withdrawn by the special license plate applicant, the director shall provide a refund to the applicant within thirty days. [2014 c 80 s 5; 2011 c 171 s 68. Prior: 2010 1st sp.s. c 7 s 96; 2010 c 161 s 607; 2004 c 222 s 4; 2003 c 196 s 302. Formerly RCW 46.16.755.]

Application—2014 c 80: See note following RCW 46.16A.200.

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective date—2010 1st sp.s. c 26; 2010 1st sp.s. c 7: See note following RCW 43.03.027.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session —2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Part headings not law—2003 c 196: See note following RCW 46.18.005.

RCW 46.18.140 Nonreviewed special license plates. (1) A special license plate series created by the legislature after January 1, 2011, that has not been reviewed and approved by the department is subject to the following requirements:

(a) The organization sponsoring the license plate series shall, within thirty days of enactment of the legislation creating the special license plate series, submit prepayment of all start-up costs associated with the creation and implementation of the special license plate in an amount determined by the department. The prepayment will be credited to the motor vehicle fund created in RCW 46.68.070. The creation and implementation of the special license plate series may not begin until payment is received by the department.

(b) If the sponsoring organization is not able to meet the prepayment requirements in (a) of this subsection and can demonstrate this fact to the satisfaction of the department, the revenues generated from the sale of the special license plates must be deposited in the motor vehicle fund created in RCW 46.68.070 until the department determines that the state's portion of the implementation costs have been fully reimbursed. When it has determined that the state has been fully reimbursed, the department must notify the treasurer to commence distribution of the revenue according to statutory provisions.

(c) The sponsoring organization must provide a proposed special license plate design to the department within thirty days of enactment of the legislation creating the special license plate series.

(2) The state must be reimbursed for its portion of the implementation costs within two years from the date the new special license plate series goes on sale to the public. If the reimbursement does not occur within the two-year time frame, the special license plate series must be placed in probationary status for a period of one year from that date. If the state is still not fully reimbursed for

its implementation costs after the one-year probation, the special license plate series must be discontinued immediately. Those special license plates issued before discontinuation are valid until replaced.

(3) If the sponsoring organization ceases to exist or the purpose of the special license plate series ceases to exist, revenues generated from the sale of the special license plates must be deposited into the motor vehicle fund created in RCW 46.68.070.

(4) A sponsoring organization may not seek to redesign its special license plate series until the entire existing inventory is sold or purchased by the organization itself. All costs for the redesign of a special license plate series must be paid by the sponsoring organization. [2014 c 80 s 6. Prior: 2010 1st sp.s. c 7 s 97; 2010 c 161 s 609; 2003 c 196 s 304. Formerly RCW 46.16.775.]

Application—2014 c 80: See note following RCW 46.16A.200.

Effective date—2010 1st sp.s. c 26; 2010 1st sp.s. c 7: See note following RCW 43.03.027.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Part headings not law—2003 c 196: See note following RCW 46.18.005.

RCW 46.18.150 Design services—Fees. The department shall offer special license plate design services to organizations that are sponsoring a new special license plate series and organizations seeking to redesign the appearance of an existing special license plate series that they sponsored. In providing this service, the department must work with the requesting organization in determining the specific qualities of the new special license plate design and must provide full design services to the organization. The department shall collect from the requesting organization a fee of two hundred dollars for providing special license plate design services. This fee includes one original special license plate design and up to five additional renditions of the original design. If the organization requests the department to provide further renditions, in addition to the five renditions provided for under the original fee, the department shall collect an additional fee of one hundred dollars per rendition. All revenue collected under this section must be deposited into the multimodal transportation account created in RCW 47.66.070. [2010 c 161 s 610; 2005 c 210 s 6; 2003 c 361 s 502. Formerly RCW 46.16.690.]

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Findings—2003 c 361: See note following RCW 82.38.030.

Effective dates—2003 c 361: See note following RCW 82.08.020.

RCW 46.18.200 Department-approved plate types. (1) Special license plate series reviewed and approved by the department:

(a) May be issued in lieu of standard issue or personalized license plates for vehicles required to display one and two license plates unless otherwise specified;

(b) Must be issued under terms and conditions established by the department;

(c) Must not be issued for vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW; and

(d) Must display a symbol or artwork approved by the department.

(2) The department approves and shall issue the following special license plates, subject to subsections (5) and (6) of this section:

LICENSE PLATE	DESCRIPTION, SYMBOL, OR ARTWORK
4-H	Displays the "4-H" logo.
Armed forces collection	Recognizes the contribution of veterans, active duty military personnel, reservists, and members of the national guard, and includes six separate designs, each containing a symbol representing a different branch of the armed forces to include army, navy, air force, marine corps, coast guard, and national guard.
Breast cancer awareness	Displays a pink ribbon symbolizing breast cancer awareness.
Donate life	Displays the donate life logo.
Endangered wildlife	Displays a symbol or artwork symbolizing endangered wildlife in Washington state.
Firefighter memorial	Displays a Maltese cross with the words "never forget."
Fred Hutch	Displays the Fred Hutch logo.
Gonzaga University alumni association	Recognizes the Gonzaga University alumni association.
Helping kids speak	Recognizes an organization that supports programs that provide no-cost speech pathology programs to children.
Historical throwback	Displays white lettering on a black background in a style similar to historical license plates issued in the early 20th century.
Keep kids safe	Recognizes efforts to prevent child abuse and neglect.
Keep Washington evergreen	Recognizes Washington as the evergreen state and funds electric charging stations. Displays green lettering on a white background in a style similar to the license plates issued by the department in the 1970s, but includes the words evergreen state along the bottom of the plate.
Law enforcement memorial	Honors law enforcement officers in Washington killed in the line of duty.
LeMay-America's Car Museum	Displays the LeMay-America's car museum logo, name, or related image.

LICENSE PLATE	DESCRIPTION, SYMBOL, OR ARTWORK
Mount St. Helens	Displays an image of Mount St. Helens.
Music matters	Displays the "Music Matters" logo.
Nautical Northwest	Displays a Northwest maritime scene.
Patches pal, or alternative name as designated by the department under RCW 46.04.383	Displays the likenesses of the J.P. Patches and Gertrude characters from the J.P. Patches show, or characters otherwise identified in accordance with RCW 46.04.383.
Professional firefighters and paramedics	Recognizes professional firefighters and paramedics who are members of the Washington state council of firefighters.
San Juan Islands	Displays a symbol or artwork recognizing the San Juan Islands.
Seattle Mariners	Displays the "Seattle Mariners" logo.
Seattle NHL hockey	Displays the logo of the Seattle NHL hockey team.
Seattle Reign FC	Displays the "Seattle Reign FC" logo.
Seattle Seahawks	Displays the "Seattle Seahawks" logo.
Seattle Sounders FC	Displays the "Seattle Sounders FC" logo.
Seattle Storm	Displays the "Seattle Storm" logo.
Seattle University	Recognizes Seattle University.
Share the road	Recognizes an organization that promotes bicycle safety and awareness education.
Ski & ride Washington	Recognizes the Washington snowsports industry.
Smokey Bear	Displays the name, image, and likeness of Smokey Bear and messages for wildfire prevention.
State flower	Recognizes the Washington state flower.
State sport	Recognizes the Washington state sport of pickleball.
United States Naval Academy	Displays a design related to the United States Naval Academy.
Volunteer firefighters	Recognizes volunteer firefighters.
Washington apples	Displays the Washington apple logo that recognizes the state's apple industry, the growers and shippers who produce and pack the world famous apples, and the tree fruit community.
Washington farmers and ranchers	Recognizes farmers and ranchers in Washington state.
Washington lighthouses	Recognizes an organization that supports selected Washington state lighthouses and provides environmental education programs.
Washington state aviation	Displays a Stearman biplane in the foreground with an image of Mount Rainier in the background.
Washington state honey bees and pollinators	Displays honey bees and pollinators.
Washington state parks	Recognizes Washington state parks as premier destinations of uncommon quality that preserve significant natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources.

LICENSE PLATE	DESCRIPTION, SYMBOL, OR ARTWORK
Washington state wrestling	Promotes and supports college wrestling in the state of Washington.
Washington tennis	Builds awareness and year-round opportunities for tennis in Washington state. Displays a symbol or artwork recognizing tennis in Washington state.
Washington wine	Displays a landscape of Washington's wine regions.
Washington's fish collection	Recognizes Washington's fish.
Washington's national park fund	Builds awareness of Washington's national parks and supports priority park programs and projects in Washington's national parks, such as enhancing visitor experience, promoting volunteerism, engaging communities, and providing educational opportunities related to Washington's national parks.
Washington's wildlife collection	Recognizes Washington's wildlife.
We love our pets	Recognizes an organization that assists local member agencies of the federation of animal welfare and control agencies to promote and perform spay/neuter surgery on Washington state pets to reduce pet overpopulation.
Wild on Washington	Symbolizes wildlife viewing in Washington state.
Working forests	Displays an image embodying working forests.

(3) Applicants for initial and renewal professional firefighters and paramedics special license plates must show proof of eligibility by providing a certificate of current membership from the Washington state council of firefighters.

(4) Applicants for initial volunteer firefighters special license plates must (a) have been a volunteer firefighter for at least 10 years or be a volunteer firefighter for one or more years and (b) have documentation of service from the district of the appropriate fire service. If the volunteer firefighter leaves firefighting service before 10 years of service have been completed, the volunteer firefighter shall surrender the license plates to the department on the registration renewal date. If the volunteer firefighter stays in service for at least 10 years and then leaves, the license plate may be retained by the former volunteer firefighter and as long as the license plate is retained for use the person will continue to pay the future registration renewals. A qualifying volunteer firefighter may have no more than one set of license plates per vehicle, and a maximum of two sets per applicant, for their personal vehicles. If the volunteer firefighter is convicted of a violation of RCW 46.61.502 or a felony, the license plates must be surrendered upon conviction.

(5) The department shall not issue the Seattle NHL hockey special license plate until the department receives signature sheets satisfying the requirements identified in RCW 46.18.110(2)(f).

(6) Except for special license plates created under chapter 385, Laws of 2025 and as specified in this subsection, the department may not issue any new special license plates until January 1, 2029.

(a) Beginning November 1, 2025, the department must begin the phased issuance of any of the special license plates created under

chapter 385, Laws of 2025 for which the department has received signature sheets that satisfy the requirements identified in RCW 46.18.110(2)(f) before March 1, 2025, the keep Washington evergreen special license plate, and the historical throwback special license plate.

(b) The department must then begin the phased issuance of any of the special license plates created under chapter 385, Laws of 2025 for which the department has received signature sheets after March 1, 2025, that satisfy the requirements identified in RCW 46.18.110(2)(f), with the order of implementation occurring based on the 3,500 signature submission date and the department's ability to implement additional special license plates. [2025 c 385 s 5. Prior: 2022 c 239 s 2; 2022 c 117 s 2; prior: 2020 c 129 s 2; 2020 c 93 s 1; prior: 2019 c 384 s 1; 2019 c 177 s 1; 2018 c 67 s 5; prior: 2017 c 25 s 1; 2017 c 11 s 2; prior: 2016 c 36 s 1; 2016 c 30 s 1; 2016 c 16 s 1; 2016 c 15 s 1; prior: 2014 c 77 s 1; 2014 c 6 s 1; 2013 c 286 s 1; 2012 c 65 s 1; prior: 2011 c 229 s 1; 2011 c 225 s 1; 2011 c 171 s 69; 2010 c 161 s 611.]

Effective date—2025 c 385 ss 3-24: See note following RCW 44.04.300.

Short title—2025 c 385: See note following RCW 46.18.060.

Effective date—2022 c 239: See note following RCW 46.17.220.

Effective date—2022 c 117: See note following RCW 46.17.220.

Effective date—2020 c 129: See note following RCW 46.17.220.

Effective date—2020 c 93: "This act takes effect July 1, 2020." [2020 c 93 s 5.]

Effective date—2019 c 384: "This act takes effect October 1, 2019." [2019 c 384 s 4.]

Effective date—2019 c 177: "This act takes effect October 1, 2019." [2019 c 177 s 5.]

Effective date—2018 c 67 ss 3-8: See note following RCW 46.17.220.

Effective date—2017 c 25: "This act takes effect October 1, 2017." [2017 c 25 s 5.]

Finding—Intent—2017 c 11: "The legislature finds that the aviation industry and community airports are an integral part of Washington's economy. Washington state is home to public use airports serving an average of eighteen thousand five hundred pilots and over nine thousand aircraft annually. They support two hundred forty-eight thousand five hundred jobs and more than fifty billion dollars in economic activity. Aviators play a vital role in our state's response to emergencies and natural disasters. Therefore, the legislature intends with this act to create the Washington state aviation license plate to honor and support the aviation community." [2017 c 11 s 1.]

Effective date—2016 c 36: "This act takes effect January 1, 2017." [2016 c 36 s 6.]

Effective date—2016 c 30: "This act takes effect January 1, 2017." [2016 c 30 s 6.]

Effective date—2016 c 16: "This act takes effect January 1, 2017." [2016 c 16 s 6.]

Effective date—2016 c 15: "This act takes effect January 1, 2017." [2016 c 15 s 6.]

Effective date—2014 c 77: "This act takes effect January 1, 2015." [2014 c 77 s 7.]

Effective date—2014 c 6: "This act takes effect January 1, 2015." [2014 c 6 s 6.]

Effective date—2013 c 286: "This act takes effect January 1, 2014." [2013 c 286 s 8.]

Effective date—2012 c 65: "This act takes effect January 1, 2013." [2012 c 65 s 7.]

Effective date—2011 c 229: "This act takes effect January 1, 2012." [2011 c 229 s 6.]

Effective date—2011 c 225: "This act takes effect January 1, 2012." [2011 c 225 s 5.]

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.205 Amateur radio license plates. (1) A registered owner may apply to the department for special license plates showing the official amateur radio call letters assigned by the federal communications commission. The amateur radio operator must:

(a) Provide a copy of the current valid federal communications commission amateur radio license;

(b) Pay the amateur radio license plate fee required under RCW 46.17.220(2), in addition to any other fees and taxes due; and

(c) Be recorded as the registered owner of the vehicle on which the amateur radio license plates will be displayed.

(2) Amateur radio license plates must be issued only for motor vehicles owned by persons who have a valid official radio operator license issued by the federal communications commission.

(3) The department shall not issue or may refuse to issue amateur radio license plates that display the consecutive letters "WSP."

(4) A person who has been issued amateur radio operator license plates as provided in this section must:

(a) Notify the department within thirty days after the federal communications commission license assigned is canceled or expires, and return the amateur radio license plates; and

(b) Provide a copy of the renewed federal communications commission license to the department after it is renewed.

(5) Amateur radio license plates may be transferred from one motor vehicle to another motor vehicle owned by the amateur radio operator upon application to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director.

(6) Facilities of official amateur radio stations may be utilized to the fullest extent in the work of governmental agencies. The director shall furnish the state military department, the department of commerce, the Washington state patrol, and all county sheriffs a list of the names, addresses, and license plate or official amateur radio call letters of each person possessing the amateur radio license plates.

(7) Failure to return the amateur radio license plates as required under subsection (4) of this section is a traffic infraction. [2025 c 58 s 2028; 2010 c 161 s 616.]

Explanatory note—2025 c 58: See note following RCW 1.16.050.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session —2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.210 Armed forces license plates. (1) A registered owner may apply to the department for special armed forces license plates for vehicles representing the following:

(a) Air force;

(b) Army;

(c) Coast guard;

(d) Marine corps;

(e) National guard; or

(f) Navy.

(2) Armed forces license plates may be purchased by:

(a) Active duty military personnel;

(b) Families of veterans and service members;

(c) Members of the national guard;

(d) Reservists; or

(e) Veterans, as defined in RCW 41.04.007.

(3) A person who applies for special armed forces license plates shall provide:

(a) DD-214 or discharge papers if the applicant is a veteran;

(b) A military identification card or retired military identification card; or

(c) A declaration of fact attesting to the applicant's eligibility as required under this section.

(4) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Child" includes stepchild, adopted child, foster child, grandchild, or son or daughter-in-law.

(b) "Family" or "families" includes an individual's spouse, child, parent, sibling, aunt, uncle, or cousin.

(c) "Parent" includes stepparent, grandparent, or in-laws.

(d) "Sibling" includes brother, half brother, stepbrother, sister, half sister, stepsister, or brother or sister-in-law.

(5) Armed forces license plates are not free of charge to disabled veterans, former prisoners of war, or spouses or domestic partners of deceased former prisoners of war under RCW 46.18.235. [2019 c 44 s 5; (2024 c 146 s 24 expired April 1, 2025); 2010 c 161 s 612.]

Expiration date—2024 c 146 s 24: "Section 24 of this act expires April 1, 2025." [2024 c 146 s 39.]

Intent—2024 c 146: See note following RCW 73.04.005.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.212 Armed forces decals. (1) The department must make available, upon request by a purchaser of special armed forces license plates, at no additional cost, a decal indicating the purchaser's military status. The list of available decals must include, but is not limited to:

(a) Active duty;

(b) Disabled veteran;

(c) Reservist;

(d) Retiree;

(e) Veteran; or

(f) Other decals established in cooperation with the department of veterans affairs.

(2) Armed forces decals must be made available only for standard six-inch by twelve-inch license plates. The department may specify where the decal may be placed on the license plate.

(3) The department of veterans affairs must enter into an agreement with the department to reimburse the department for the costs associated with providing military status decals described in this section. [2010 c 161 s 613.]

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.220 Collector vehicle license plates. (1) A registered owner may apply to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director for a collector vehicle license plate for a motor vehicle or travel trailer that is at least 30 years old. The motor vehicle must be operated primarily as a collector vehicle and be in good running order. The applicant for the collector vehicle license plate shall:

(a) After January 15, 2026, provide proof of ownership and a valid registration certificate for a second vehicle that will be used for daily driving, commuting, or business purposes;

(b) After January 15, 2026, provide proof of a current vehicle liability insurance policy or collector vehicle insurance policy for

the vehicle being registered, with liability limits of at least the amounts listed under RCW 46.29.090;

(c) Purchase a registration for the motor vehicle or travel trailer as required under chapters 46.16A and 46.17 RCW; and

(d) Pay the special license plate fee established under RCW 46.17.220(5), in addition to any other fees or taxes required by law.

(2) A person applying for a collector vehicle license plate may:

(a) Receive a collector vehicle license plate assigned by the department; or

(b) Provide an actual Washington state issued license plate designated for general use in the year of the vehicle's manufacture.

(3) Collector vehicle license plates:

(a) Are valid for the life of the motor vehicle or travel trailer;

(b) Are not required to be renewed; and

(c) Must be displayed on the rear of the motor vehicle or travel trailer.

(4) A collector vehicle registered under this section may only be used for participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, and occasional pleasure driving.

(5) Collector vehicle license plates under subsection (2)(b) of this section may be transferred from one vehicle to another vehicle described in subsection (1) of this section upon application to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director.

(6) A person driving a motor vehicle with a collector vehicle license plate must maintain collector vehicle insurance with respect to the vehicle and comply with all requirements of chapter 46.30 RCW.

(7) Any person who knowingly provides a false or facsimile license plate under subsection (2)(b) of this section is subject to a traffic infraction and fine in an amount equal to the monetary penalty for a violation of RCW 46.16A.200(7)(b). Additionally, the person must pay for the cost of a collector vehicle license plate as listed in RCW 46.17.220(5), unless already paid.

(8) A collector vehicle that is a motor vehicle may tow a trailer if the trailer is being used for participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, and parades.

(9) Any person who does not meet the requirements of subsections (1) through (8) of this section must surrender the current license plate or plates to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director. A person whose collector vehicle registration has been canceled may operate the vehicle once the applicable requirements of chapters 46.16A and 46.17 RCW have been satisfied.

(10) The department is authorized to make exceptions to the requirements under subsection (1)(a) of this section if the owner demonstrates to the department's satisfaction that the owner has alternative means for addressing the owner's regular transportation needs.

(11) The requirements of subsections (1)(b) and (6) of this section apply only when the collector vehicle is operated on a public highway pursuant to RCW 46.30.020.

(12) The department shall adopt rules to define collector vehicle insurance for the purposes of this section. [2025 c 332 s 4; 2024 c 131 s 1; 2015 c 200 s 3. Prior: 2011 c 243 s 1; 2011 c 171 s 70; 2010 c 161 s 617.]

Effective date—2025 c 332: See note following RCW 46.18.255.

Effective date—2015 c 200: See note following RCW 46.16A.428.

Effective date—2011 c 243 s 1: "Section 1 of this act takes effect August 1, 2011." [2011 c 243 s 3.]

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session —2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.2201 Collector vehicle license plates—Vehicle information and identification. The department must provide a method by which law enforcement officers may readily access vehicle information for collector vehicles by using the collector vehicle license plate number. In the event duplicate license plate numbers have been issued to more than one collector vehicle, the department must provide a method for law enforcement officers to identify the correct vehicle. [2011 c 243 s 2.]

Effective date—2011 c 243 s 2: "Section 2 of this act takes effect January 1, 2012." [2011 c 243 s 4.]

RCW 46.18.225 Collegiate license plates. A state university, regional university, or state college as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 may apply to the department, in a form approved by the department and request the department to issue a series of collegiate license plates, for display on motor vehicles required to display one or two license plates, excluding vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW, upon terms and conditions established by the department, depicting the name and mascot or symbol of the college or university, as submitted and approved for use by the requesting institution. [2011 c 332 s 4; 2010 c 161 s 615; 1994 c 194 s 3. Formerly RCW 46.16.324.]

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session —2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.230 Medal of Honor license plates. (1) A registered owner who has been awarded the Medal of Honor may apply to the department for no more than three special license plate sets for use on no more than three motor vehicles required to display one or two license plates, excluding vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW, upon terms and conditions established by the department. The Medal of Honor recipient must:

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

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

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

(a) For no more than three personal motor vehicles owned by a person who has received the Medal of Honor; and

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

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

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

(5) A registered owner who is eligible for Medal of Honor license plates may, in lieu of applying for the special license plates under this section, apply for regular issue license plates for no more than three personal motor vehicles owned by the registered owner and receive the full benefit of the vehicle license fee, license plate fee, and motor vehicle excise tax exemptions provided in subsection (2)(b) of this section. [2014 c 181 s 1; 2011 c 332 s 5; 2010 c 161 s 618.]

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.235 Disabled American veteran or former prisoner of war license plates. (1) A registered owner who is a veteran, as defined in RCW 41.04.007, may apply to the department for disabled American veteran or former prisoner of war license plates, for use on one personal use motor vehicle required to display one or two license plates, excluding vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW, upon terms and conditions established by the department. The veteran must be recorded as the registered owner of the motor vehicle on which the disabled American veteran or former prisoner of war license plate or plates will be displayed and:

(a) Provide certification from the veterans administration or the military service from which the veteran was discharged that the veteran has a service-connected disability rating;

(b) Have lost the use of both hands or one foot;

(c) Have been captured and incarcerated by an enemy of the United States during a period of war with the United States and have received a prisoner of war medal;

(d) Have become blind in both eyes as the result of military service; or

(e) Be rated by the veterans administration or the military service from which the veteran was discharged and be receiving service-connected compensation at the one hundred percent rate that is expected to exist for more than one year.

(2) The special license plates under this section must:

(a) Display distinguishing marks, letters, or numerals indicating that the registered owner is a disabled American veteran or former prisoner of war; and

(b) Be issued for one personal use vehicle without the payment of any vehicle license fees, license plate fees, or excise taxes.

(3) A registered owner who is a veteran, as defined in RCW 41.04.007, may, in lieu of applying for the special license plates under this section, apply for regular issue or any qualifying special license plate and receive the full benefit of the vehicle license fee and excise tax exemption provided in subsection (2)(b) of this section.

(4) The department may periodically verify the one hundred percent rate as described in subsection (1)(e) of this section.

(5) A veteran who has been issued disabled American veteran or former prisoner of war license plates under this section before July 1, 1983, continues to be eligible for the vehicle license fee and excise tax exemption described in subsection (2)(b) of this section.

(6) A disabled American veteran and former prisoner of war license plate or plates may be transferred from one motor vehicle to another motor vehicle owned by the veteran upon application to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director.

(7) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Blind" means the definition of "blind" used by the state of Washington in determining eligibility for financial assistance to the blind under Title 74 RCW; and

(b) "Special license plates" does not include any plate from the armed forces license plate collection established in *RCW 46.18.200(3).

(8) Any unauthorized use of a special license plate under this section is a gross misdemeanor. [2011 c 332 s 6; 2010 c 161 s 619.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 46.18.200 was amended by 2011 c 229 s 1, 2011 c 225 s 1, and 2011 c 171 s 69, each changing subsection (3) to subsection (2).

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.245 Gold star license plates. (1) A registered owner who is an eligible family member of a member of the United States armed forces who died while in service to his or her country, or as a result of his or her service, may apply to the department for special gold star license plates for use on a motor vehicle. The registered owner must:

(a) Be a resident of this state;

(b) Provide proof to the satisfaction of the department that the registered owner is an eligible family member, which includes:

(i) A widow;

(ii) A widower;

(iii) A biological parent;

(iv) An adoptive parent;

(v) A stepparent;

(vi) An adult in loco parentis or foster parent;

(vii) A biological child;

(viii) An adopted child; or

(ix) A sibling;

(c) Provide certification from the Washington state department of veterans affairs that the registered owner qualifies for the special license plate under this section; and

(d) Be recorded as the registered owner of the motor vehicle on which the gold star license plates will be displayed.

(2) In lieu of applying for a gold star license plate under this section, an eligible widow or widower under subsection (1)(b) of this section may apply for a standard issue license plate or any qualifying special license plate for one personal use motor vehicle and be exempt from payment of annual vehicle registration fees, motor vehicle excise taxes, and license plate fees for that vehicle.

(3)(a) For a widow, a widower, a biological parent, an adoptive parent, a stepparent, or an adult in loco parentis or foster parent applicant, a gold star license plate must be issued:

(i) Only for motor vehicles owned by qualifying applicants; and

(ii) Without payment of any vehicle license fees, license plate fees, and motor vehicle excise taxes for one motor vehicle. For other motor vehicles, a qualified widow, a widower, a biological parent, an adoptive parent, a stepparent, or an adult in loco parentis or foster parent applicant may purchase gold star license plates without payment of any license plate fees, but the applicant must pay all other fees and taxes required by law for registering the motor vehicle.

(b) For a biological child, an adopted child, or a sibling applicant, a gold star license plate must be issued:

(i) Only for motor vehicles owned by qualifying applicants; and

(ii) Without payment of any license plate fees but the applicant must pay all other fees and taxes required by law for registering the motor vehicle.

(4) Gold star license plates must be replaced, free of charge, if the license plates become lost, stolen, damaged, defaced, or destroyed.

(5) Gold star license plates may be transferred from one motor vehicle to another motor vehicle owned by the eligible family member, as described in subsection (1) of this section, upon application to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director. [2019 c 210 s 1; 2017 c 24 s 1; 2015 c 208 s 1; 2013 c 137 s 1; 2010 c 161 s 621.]

Effective date—2013 c 137: "This act takes effect August 1, 2013." [2013 c 137 s 2.]

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.255 Horseless carriage license plates. (1) A registered owner may apply to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director for a horseless carriage license plate for a motor vehicle that is manufactured or built before January 1, 1916. The motor vehicle must be operated primarily as a collector vehicle and be in good running order. The applicant for the horseless carriage license plate shall:

(a) Purchase a registration for the motor vehicle as required under chapters 46.16A and 46.17 RCW; and

(b) Pay the special license plate fee established under *RCW 46.17.220(11), in addition to any other fees or taxes required by law.

(2) Horseless carriage license plates:

(a) Are valid for the life of the motor vehicle;

(b) Are not required to be renewed;
(c) Are not transferable to any other motor vehicle; and
(d) Must be displayed on the rear of the motor vehicle. [2025 c 332 s 3; 2020 c 18 s 15; 2011 c 171 s 71; 2010 c 161 s 623.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 46.17.220 was amended by 2025 c 385 s 4, changing subsection (11) to subsection (14), effective November 1, 2025.

Effective date—2025 c 332: "This act takes effect January 15, 2026." [2025 c 332 s 6.]

Explanatory statement—2020 c 18: See note following RCW 43.79A.040.

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.265 Military affiliate radio system license plates. (1) A registered owner who has a valid military affiliate radio system station license may apply to the department for special license plates for use on only one motor vehicle owned by the qualified applicant. The applicant must:
(a) Be a resident of this state;
(b) Provide a copy of the current official military affiliate radio system station license authorized by the department of defense and issued by the United States army, air force, navy, or marine corps;
(c) Be recorded as the registered owner of the motor vehicle on which the military affiliate radio system license plates will be displayed; and
(d) Pay the military affiliate radio system license plate fee required under *RCW 46.17.220(14), in addition to any other fees or taxes required by law.
(2) A person who has been issued military affiliate radio system license plates as provided in this section must:
(a) Notify the department if the military affiliate radio system station license assigned is canceled or expires; and
(b) Provide a copy of the renewed military affiliate radio system station license to the department when it is renewed.
(3) Military affiliate radio system license plates:
(a) Are not available for motorcycles; and
(b) May be transferred from one motor vehicle to another motor vehicle owned by the military affiliate radio system operator upon application to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director. [2020 c 18 s 16; 2010 c 161 s 624.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 46.17.220 was amended by 2025 c 385 s 4, changing subsection (14) to subsection (19), effective November 1, 2025.

Explanatory statement—2020 c 18: See note following RCW 43.79A.040.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session —2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.270 Pearl Harbor survivor license plates. (1) A registered owner who has survived the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, may apply to the department for special license plates for use on only one motor vehicle required to display one or two license plates, excluding vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW, upon terms and conditions established by the department, and owned by the qualified applicant. The applicant must:

(a) Be a resident of this state;

(b) Have been a member of the United States armed forces on December 7, 1941;

(c) Have been on station on December 7, 1941, between the hours of 7:55 a.m. and 9:45 a.m. Hawaii time at Pearl Harbor, the island of Oahu, or offshore at a distance not to exceed three miles;

(d) Have received a qualifying discharge, as defined in RCW 73.04.005, from the United States armed forces;

(e) Provide certification by a Washington state chapter of the Pearl Harbor survivors association showing that qualifications in (c) of this subsection have been met;

(f) Be recorded as the registered owner of the motor vehicle on which the Pearl Harbor survivor license plate or plates will be displayed; and

(g) Pay all fees and taxes required by law for registering the motor vehicle.

(2) Pearl Harbor survivor license plates must be issued without the payment of any license plate fee.

(3) Pearl Harbor survivor license plates must be replaced, free of charge, if the license plates have become lost, stolen, damaged, defaced, or destroyed.

(4) Pearl Harbor survivor license plates may be issued to the surviving spouse or domestic partner of a Pearl Harbor survivor who met the requirements in subsection (1) of this section. The surviving spouse or domestic partner must be a resident of this state. If the surviving spouse remarries or the surviving domestic partner marries or enters into a new domestic partnership, he or she must return the special license plates to the department within fifteen days and apply for regular license plates or another type of special license plate.

(5) A Pearl Harbor survivor license plate or plates may be transferred from one motor vehicle to another motor vehicle owned by the Pearl Harbor survivor or the surviving spouse or domestic partner as described in subsection (4) of this section upon application to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director. [2024 c 146 s 25; 2011 c 332 s 7; 2010 c 161 s 625.]

Effective date—2024 c 146 ss 25-27: "Sections 25 through 27 of this act take effect April 1, 2025." [2024 c 146 s 38.]

Intent—2024 c 146: See note following RCW 73.04.005.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.275 Personalized license plates. (1) A registered owner may apply to the department for a personalized license plate for any vehicle required to display one or two vehicle license plates, excluding vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW, upon terms and conditions established by the department. The application for personalized license plates must contain the combination of letters or numbers, or both, requested by the registered owner.

(2) Personalized license plates must:

(a) Be the same design as standard issue license plates;

(b) Consist of numbers or letters or any combination of numbers or letters;

(c) Not exceed seven positions unless proposed by the department and approved by the Washington state patrol; and

(d) Not contain less than one character.

(3) A person who purchased personalized license plates containing three letters and three digits on or between the dates of August 9, 1971, and November 6, 1973, is not required to pay the additional annual renewal fee described in RCW 46.17.210.

(4) The department shall not issue or may refuse to issue personalized license plates that:

(a) Duplicate or conflict with an existing or projected vehicle license plate series or other numbering systems for records kept by the department; or

(b) May carry connotations offensive to good taste and decency or which would be misleading.

(5) Personalized license plates must be issued only to the registered owner of the vehicle on which they are to be displayed. The registered owner must:

(a) Pay the personalized license plate fee required under RCW 46.17.210, in addition to any other fee or taxes due;

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

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

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

(6) The department may establish rules as necessary to carry out this section including, but not limited to, identifying the maximum number of positions on personalized license plates for motorcycles. [2010 c 161 s 626.]

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.277 Personalized special license plates. (1) A registered owner may purchase personalized license plates with a

special license plate background for any vehicle required to display one or two vehicle license plates, excluding:

(a) Amateur radio license plates;

(b) Collector vehicle license plates;

(c) Disabled American veteran license plates;

(d) Former prisoner of war license plates;

(e) Horseless carriage license plates;

(f) Medal of Honor license plates;

(g) Military affiliate radio system license plates;

(h) Pearl Harbor survivor license plates;

(i) Restored license plates; and

(j) Vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW.

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

(a) Consist of numbers or letters or any combination of numbers or letters;

(b) Not exceed seven characters; and

(c) Not contain less than one character.

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

(a) Duplicate or conflict with existing or projected vehicle license plate series or other numbering systems for records kept by the department; or

(b) May carry connotations offensive to good taste and decency or which would be misleading.

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

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

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

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

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

(5) The department may establish rules as necessary to carry out this section including, but not limited to, identifying the maximum number of positions on personalized special license plates for motorcycles. [2014 c 181 s 3; 2010 c 161 s 627.]

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.280 Purple Heart license plates. (1) A registered owner who has been awarded a Purple Heart medal by any branch of the United States armed forces, including the merchant marines and the

women's air forces service pilots may apply to the department for special license plates for use on a motor vehicle required to display one or two license plates, excluding vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW, upon terms and conditions established by the department, and owned by the qualified applicant. The applicant must:

(a) Be a resident of this state;

(b) Have been wounded during one of this nation's wars or conflicts identified in RCW 41.04.005;

(c) Have received a qualifying discharge, as defined in RCW 73.04.005, from the United States armed forces;

(d) Provide a copy of the armed forces document showing the recipient was awarded the Purple Heart medal; and

(e) Be recorded as the registered owner of the motor vehicle on which the Purple Heart license plate or plates will be displayed.

(2) Purple Heart license plates must be issued without the payment of any vehicle license fees, license plate fees, motor vehicle excise taxes, and special license plate fees for one motor vehicle. For other motor vehicles, qualified applicants may purchase Purple Heart license plates for the fee required under *RCW 46.17.220(18) and all other fees and taxes required by law for registering the motor vehicle.

(3) Purple Heart license plates may be issued to the surviving spouse or domestic partner of a Purple Heart recipient who met the requirements in subsection (1) of this section. The surviving spouse or domestic partner must be a resident of this state. If the surviving spouse remarries or the surviving domestic partner marries or enters into a new domestic partnership, he or she must return the special license plates to the department within fifteen days and apply for regular license plates or another type of special license plate.

(4) A Purple Heart license plate or plates may be transferred from one motor vehicle to another motor vehicle owned by the Purple Heart recipient or the surviving spouse or domestic partner as described in subsection (3) of this section upon application to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director. [2024 c 146 s 26; 2019 c 139 s 1; 2016 c 31 s 1; 2011 c 332 s 8; 2010 c 161 s 628.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 46.17.220 was amended by 2025 c 385 s 4, changing subsection (18) to subsection (25), effective November 1, 2025.

Effective date—2024 c 146 ss 25-27: See note following RCW 46.18.270.

Intent—2024 c 146: See note following RCW 73.04.005.

Effective date—2016 c 31: "This act takes effect July 1, 2017." [2016 c 31 s 5.]

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.285 Ride share license plates. (1) A registered owner who uses a passenger motor vehicle for ride sharing or ride sharing for persons with special transportation needs, as defined in RCW

46.74.010, shall apply to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director for special ride share license plates. The registered owner must qualify for the tax exemptions provided in RCW 82.08.0287, 82.12.0282, or 82.44.015, and pay the special ride share license plate fee required under *RCW 46.17.220(18) when the special ride share license plates are initially issued.

(2) The special ride share license plates:

(a) Must be of a distinguishing separate numerical series or design as defined by the department;

(b) Must be returned to the department when no longer in use or when the registered owner no longer qualifies for the tax exemptions provided in subsection (1) of this section; and

(c) Are not required to be renewed annually for motor vehicles described in RCW 46.16A.170.

(3) Special ride share license plates may be transferred from one motor vehicle to another motor vehicle as described in subsection (1) of this section upon application to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director.

(4) Any person who knowingly makes a false statement of a material fact in the application for a special license plate under subsection (1) of this section is guilty of a gross misdemeanor. [2021 c 135 s 1; 2020 c 18 s 17; 2011 c 171 s 72; 2010 c 161 s 629.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 46.17.220 was amended by 2022 c 239 s 1, changing subsection (18) to subsection (19), effective October 1, 2022. RCW 46.17.220 was subsequently amended by 2025 c 385 s 4, changing subsection (19) to subsection (26), effective November 1, 2025.

Effective date—2021 c 135: "This act takes effect September 1, 2021." [2021 c 135 s 11.]

Explanatory statement—2020 c 18: See note following RCW 43.79A.040.

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session —2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.290 Square dancer license plates. A registered owner may apply to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director for a square dancer license plate. The registered owner shall pay the special license plate fee required under *RCW 46.17.220(27), in addition to any other fee or tax required by law. The square dancer license plate may be issued in lieu of standard issue or personalized license plates for motor vehicles required to display one or two license plates, but may not be issued for vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW. [2020 c 18 s 18; 2011 c 332 s 9; 2010 c 161 s 630.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 46.17.220 was amended by 2020 c 129 s 1, changing subsection (27) to subsection (28), effective October 1,

2020. RCW 46.17.220 was amended by 2022 c 239 s 1, changing subsection (28) to subsection (29), effective October 1, 2022. RCW 46.17.220 was subsequently amended by 2025 c 385 s 4, changing subsection (29) to subsection (38), effective November 1, 2025.

Explanatory statement—2020 c 18: See note following RCW 43.79A.040.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session —2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

RCW 46.18.295 Veterans and military personnel emblems. (1) Veterans and active duty military personnel may purchase a veterans remembrance emblem, campaign medal emblem, or military service award emblem. The emblem is to be displayed on license plates in the manner described by the department, existing vehicular registration procedures, and current laws.

(2) For purposes of this section:

(a) "Active duty military personnel" means an individual serving on active duty in the United States armed forces.

(b) "Veteran" has the meaning defined in RCW 41.04.007.

(3) Veterans and active duty military personnel who served during periods of war or armed conflict may purchase a remembrance emblem depicting campaign ribbons which they were awarded.

(4) The following campaign ribbon remembrance emblems are available:

(a) World War I victory medal;

(b) World War II Asiatic-Pacific campaign medal;

(c) World War II European-African Middle East campaign medal;

(d) World War II American campaign medal;

(e) Korean service medal;

(f) Vietnam service medal;

(g) Armed forces expeditionary medal awarded after 1958; and

(h) Southwest Asia medal.

The director may issue additional campaign ribbon emblems by rule as authorized decorations by the United States department of defense.

(5) The following military service award emblems are available:

(a) Distinguished Service Cross;

(b) Navy Cross;

(c) Air Force Cross;

(d) Silver Star medal; and

(e) Bronze Star medal.

(6) Veterans or active duty military personnel requesting a veteran remembrance emblem, campaign medal emblem, or military service award emblem or emblems must:

(a) Pay a prescribed fee set by the department; and

(b) Show proof of eligibility through:

(i) Providing a DD-214 or discharge papers, as well as necessary documentation to prove eligibility as a veteran with an other than honorable characterization of service, if a veteran;

(ii) Providing a copy of orders awarding a campaign ribbon if an individual serving on military active duty;

(iii) Providing a copy of orders awarding a military service award; or

(iv) Attesting in a notarized affidavit of their eligibility as required under this section.

(7) Veterans or active duty military personnel who purchase a veteran remembrance emblem, campaign medal emblem, or military service award emblem must be the legal or registered owner of the vehicle on which the emblem is to be displayed. [2024 c 146 s 27; 2012 c 69 s 1; 2011 c 171 s 73; 1997 c 234 s 1; 1991 c 339 s 11; 1990 c 250 s 6. Formerly RCW 46.16.319.]

Effective date—2024 c 146 ss 25-27: See note following RCW 46.18.270.

Intent—2024 c 146: See note following RCW 73.04.005.

Effective date—2012 c 69: "This act takes effect January 1, 2013." [2012 c 69 s 3.]

Intent—Effective date—2011 c 171: See notes following RCW 4.24.210.

Effective dates—1990 c 250 ss 1-13: See note following RCW 10.05.060.

RCW 46.18.300 Veteran suicide emblems. (1) The general public may purchase a prevent veteran suicide emblem for a prescribed fee set by the department. The emblem must be displayed on license plates in the manner described by the department, existing vehicular registration procedures, and current laws.

(2) The department, in creating the prevent veteran suicide emblem, must consult with the department of veterans affairs on the design of the emblem. The emblem must incorporate the 988 suicide prevention hotline or its successor.

(3) Revenues from the prevent veteran suicide emblem must be deposited into the veterans and military members suicide prevention account created in RCW 43.60A.270. [2022 c 191 s 8.]

Effective date—2022 c 191 s 8: "Section 8 of this act takes effect October 1, 2022." [2022 c 191 s 15.]

Findings—Intent—2022 c 191: See note following RCW 43.60A.260.

RCW 46.18.310 Keep Washington evergreen license plates. (1) The department shall create, design, and issue a keep Washington evergreen license plate that may be used in lieu of standard issue or personalized license plates for motor vehicles required to display one or two license plates, excluding vehicles registered under chapter 46.87 RCW, upon terms and conditions established by the department.

(2) A registered owner may apply to the department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the director for a keep Washington evergreen license plate. The registered owner shall pay the special license plate fee required under RCW 46.17.220(16), in addition to any other fee or tax required by law. [2025 c 385 s 10.]

Effective date—2025 c 385 ss 3-24: See note following RCW 44.04.300.

Short title—2025 c 385: See note following RCW 46.18.060.