

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2254

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to vehicle license plates for officers of a recognized foreign organization.

Brief Description: Providing special plates and fee exemptions for representatives of foreign organizations.

Sponsors: Representatives Van Luven, Romero, Backlund, Scott, Foreman, Sheldon, Horn and Benton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Trade & Economic Development: 1/17/96 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/9/96, 96-0.

Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRADE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Van Luven, Chairman; Radcliff, Vice Chairman; D. Schmidt, Vice Chairman; Sheldon, Ranking Minority Member; Veloria, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ballasiotes; Hatfield; Hickel; Sherstad; Skinner and Valle.

Staff: Kenny Pittman (786-7392).

Background: The Department of Licensing (DOL) may issue special license plates to every honorary consul or official representative of a foreign country, duly licensed and holding an exequatur issued by the U.S. Department of State. The applicant is required to pay the regular license fee and the motor vehicle excise tax before the special license plate is issued by DOL.

Representatives of the government of Taiwan, through the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, enjoy most of the privileges afforded to other foreign diplomatic residents; however, there are no provisions allowing the Department of Licensing to issue them special license plates.

The issuance of diplomatic license plates is considered one way to show the consuls or official representatives the importance of their international relationships.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Licensing (DOL) is authorized to issue special license plates for passenger vehicles that are owned or leased by officers of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office. The applicant for a special license plate is exempt from payment of the regular license fees, the state motor vehicle excise tax, and any county vehicle license fees. The license plates must bear the words "Foreign Organization" to distinguish them from diplomatic license plates. The foreign organization is responsible for the entire cost of producing the special license plates.

The special license plates may be transferred to another vehicle; however, DOL must be notified of the transfer. License plates that are removed but not transferred to another vehicle are to be immediately forwarded to DOL to be destroyed. When the owner or lessee is relieved of his or her duties, the license plates must be returned to the DOL and regular plates issued.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The representatives of the government Taiwan are entitled to most of the privileges, exemptions and immunities afforded to other foreign diplomatic personnel in the United States. However, their vehicles still bear regular Washington license plates. The issuance of special license plates to official representatives of the Taiwan government would give them the privilege enjoyed by other foreign diplomatic personnel in Washington State.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Steve Van Luven, prime sponsor; Katharine Chang and Robert Chen, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office; Rubin Yu; and Gary Grant, Taiwan Sister State Association.