

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 2254

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 26, 1996

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: Transportation: 2/26/96 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Owen, Chair; Heavey, Vice Chair; Goings, Morton, Oke, Prentice, Prince, Rasmussen, Schow, Sellar, Thibaudeau and Wood.

Staff: Jennifer Joly (786-7305)

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 must bear the entire cost of producing the special license plates, but 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 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: Taiwan is Washington State's fifth largest trading partner. Major Washington exports to Taiwan include airplanes, apples and wheat. Additionally, the world's largest shipping company, Evergreen Shipping, Inc., headquartered in Taiwan, has operations at the ports of Seattle and Tacoma. The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office deserves recognition via a foreign organization license plate.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Katherine Chang and Robert Chen, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (pro).