
HOUSE BILL 2269

State of Washington 62nd Legislature 2012 Regular Session

By Representatives Angel, Armstrong, and Johnson

Read first time 01/10/12. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to license plate requirements; amending RCW
2 46.16A.200 and 46.17.200; adding a new section to chapter 46.17 RCW;
3 and creating a new section.

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

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 46.16A.200 and 2011 c 171 s 46 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

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

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

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

14 (c) Must designate the name of the state of Washington without
15 abbreviation;

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

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

1 (f) Before July 1, 2010, may display a symbol or artwork approved
2 by the former special license plate review board and the legislature.
3 Beginning July 1, 2010, special license plate series approved by the
4 department and enacted into law by the legislature may display a symbol
5 or artwork approved by the department.

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

9 (3) **Dealer license plates.** License plates issued to a dealer must
10 contain an indication that the license plates have been issued to a
11 vehicle dealer.

12 (4)(a) **Furnished.** The director shall furnish to all persons making
13 satisfactory application for a vehicle registration and payment of the
14 license plate fee under section 2 of this act:

15 (i) Two identical license plates each containing the license plate
16 number for a commercial motor vehicle with a gross vehicle weight in
17 excess of twenty-six thousand pounds; or

18 (ii) One license plate (~~(if the vehicle is a)~~) for all other motor
19 vehicles, including a passenger vehicle, trailer, semitrailer, camper,
20 moped, collector vehicle, horseless carriage, or motorcycle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 (a) Surrender the current license plate or plates to the
2 department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the
3 director;

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

5 (c) Pay a change of classification fee required under RCW
6 46.17.310.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 (8) **Transfer.** (a) Standard issue license plates follow the vehicle
34 when ownership of the vehicle changes unless the registered owner
35 wishes to retain the license plates and transfer them to a replacement
36 vehicle of the same use. A registered owner wishing to keep standard
37 issue license plates shall pay the license plate transfer fee required
38 under RCW 46.17.200(1)(c) when applying for license plate transfer.

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

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

8 (9) **Replacement.** (a) An owner or the owner's authorized
9 representative shall apply for a replacement license plate or plates if
10 the current license plate or plates assigned to the vehicle have been
11 lost, defaced, or destroyed, or if one or both plates have become so
12 illegible or are in such a condition as to be difficult to distinguish.
13 An owner or the owner's authorized representative may apply for a
14 replacement license plate or plates at any time the owner chooses.

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

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

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

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

22 (10) **Periodic replacement.** License plates must be replaced
23 periodically to ensure maximum legibility and reflectivity. The
24 department shall:

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

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

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

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

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

36 (b) Congressional Medal of Honor license plates issued under RCW
37 46.18.230;

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

3 (12) **Rules.** The department may adopt rules to implement this
4 section.

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

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 46.17 RCW
10 to read as follows:

11 In addition to all other fees and taxes required by law, the
12 department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the
13 director shall charge a fee for initial license plates that is
14 identical to the fee for replacement license plates under RCW
15 46.17.200(1)(a) to be distributed under RCW 46.68.070.

16 **Sec. 3.** RCW 46.17.200 and 2011 c 171 s 56 are each amended to read
17 as follows:

18 (1) In addition to all other fees and taxes required by law, the
19 department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by the
20 director shall charge:

21 (a)(i) The following license plate fees for each license plate,
22 unless the license plate is furnished for a passenger vehicle or the
23 owner or type of vehicle is exempt from payment:

FEE TYPE	FEE	DISTRIBUTION
Reflectivity	\$2.00	RCW 46.68.070
Replacement	\$10.00	RCW 46.68.070
Replacement, motorcycle	\$2.00	RCW 46.68.070
Original issue, moped	\$1.50	RCW 46.68.070

30 (ii) For passenger vehicles, a reflectivity fee of four dollars to
31 be distributed under RCW 46.68.070 and a replacement fee of twenty
32 dollars to be distributed under RCW 46.68.070.

1 (b) A license plate retention fee, as required under RCW
2 46.16A.200(10)((~~(a)(iii)~~)) (c), of twenty dollars if the owner wishes
3 to retain the current license plate number upon license plate
4 replacement, unless the owner or type of vehicle is exempt from
5 payment. The twenty dollar fee must be deposited in the multimodal
6 transportation account created in RCW 47.66.070.

7 (c) A ten dollar license plate transfer fee, as required under RCW
8 46.16A.200(8)(a), when transferring standard issue license plates from
9 one vehicle to another, unless the owner or type of vehicle is exempt
10 from payment. The ten dollar license plate transfer fee must be
11 deposited in the motor vehicle fund created in RCW 46.68.070.

12 (d) Former prisoner of war license plates, as described in RCW
13 46.18.235, may be transferred to a replacement vehicle upon payment of
14 a five dollar license plate fee, in addition to any other fee required
15 by law.

16 (2) The department may, upon request, provide license plates that
17 have been used and returned to the department to individuals for
18 nonvehicular use. The department may charge a fee of up to five
19 dollars per license plate to cover costs or recovery for postage and
20 handling. The department may waive the fee for license plates used in
21 educational projects and may, by rule, provide standards for the fee
22 waiver and restrictions on the number of license plates provided to any
23 one person. The fee must be deposited in the motor vehicle fund
24 created in RCW 46.68.070.

25 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This act applies to vehicle registrations
26 that are due or become due on or after January 1, 2013.

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