

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1944

As of March 20, 2013

Title: An act relating to vehicle license plate and registration fraud.

Brief Description: Addressing vehicle license plate and registration fraud.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representative Haler).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/09/13, 87-11.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 3/19/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Amanda Cecil (786-7429)

Background: Vehicles that are registered for use on public highways must display license plates that are issued by the Department of Licensing (DOL). Two identical license plates must be displayed on most passenger cars and pickup trucks. Under certain circumstances, such as a trailer, a single plate may be displayed. Failure to properly display a valid license plate is a traffic infraction, subject to a penalty of \$124. Additionally, it is a traffic infraction subject to a fine not to exceed \$500 to transfer a license plate between vehicles without first making application.

Summary of Bill: The following acts are gross misdemeanors punishable by confinement of up to 364 days in the county jail and a fine of \$1,000 for the first offense, \$2,500 for a second offense, and \$5,000 for any subsequent offense, which may not be suspended, deferred, or reduced:

- switching or flipping license plates physically or using technology to flip or change the appearance of a license plate;
- selling a license plate-flipping device or technology that changes the appearance of a license plate; and
- falsifying a vehicle registration.

A vehicle that is found with an installed license plate-flipping device or technology to change the appearance of a license plate may be impounded by a law enforcement officer as evidence.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

A license plate-flipping device is defined as a device that enables a license plate on a vehicle to be changed to another license plate either manually or electronically. This also includes technology that is capable of changing the appearance of a license plate to appear as a different license plate.

Citizens are encouraged to notify law enforcement immediately if they observe a vehicle with a license plate-flipping device.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The bill was brought forward by law enforcement concerning the license plate flipper that automatically changes a vehicle license plate from one plate to another license plate within seconds. This changing of a license plate has officer safety implications. A vehicle using this technology was used in a crime and, by flipping the license plate, they were able to evade arrest.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Haler, prime sponsor.