

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2197

As of February 29, 2020

Title: An act relating to establishing an exception to the requirement that vehicle license plates be visible at all times for vehicles using certain cargo carrying devices.

Brief Description: Establishing an exception to the requirement that vehicle license plates be visible at all times for vehicles using certain cargo carrying devices.

Sponsors: Representatives Thai, McCaslin, Walen, Slatter, Tarleton, Appleton, Orwall, Shewmake and Wylie.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/16/20, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/24/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Provides the display of a single license plate properly attached to a vehicle that has two license plates properly attached may be temporarily obstructed by a trailer hitch; a wheelchair lift or wheelchair carrier; a trailer being towed by the vehicle; or a bicycle rack, ski rack, or luggage rack.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Kim Johnson (786-7472)

Background: Vehicles required to be registered with the Department of Licensing (DOL) must display license plates or decals assigned by DOL. License plates must be:

- attached conspicuously at the front and rear of each vehicle if two license plates have been issued;
- kept clean and be able to be plainly seen and read at all times; and
- attached in a horizontal position at a distance of not more than 4 feet from the ground.

The Washington State Patrol may grant exceptions to the above license plate display requirements if the body construction of the vehicle makes compliance impossible.

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.

Summary of Bill: Provided the requirements specified below are met, the display of a single license plate properly attached to a vehicle that has two license plates properly attached may be temporarily obstructed by one or more of the following devices by the cargo the device is carrying:

- a trailer hitch;
- a wheelchair lift or wheelchair carrier;
- a trailer being towed by the vehicle, provided the trailer meets any applicable trailer license plate requirements; or
- a bicycle rack, ski rack, or luggage rack.

For the above license plate visibility exception to apply, the device must be installed according to manufacturer specifications or generally accepted installation practices, and the device or cargo the device is carrying must not prevent the license plate from being read from one or more accessible viewing angles when the vehicle is parked, except if the device is a trailer meeting trailer license plate requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill came from my constituents. It is a common sense bill allowing partial obstructions of license plates which are temporary in nature. Individuals do not have any intention to break the law. If we want to encourage biking and getting out in the outdoors then we should have policies that make it clear that this is ok. Also, this bill will help address people who need to use mobility assistive devices that are carried on a device outside of the vehicle. The bill will still let officers pull people over, they just can't give them a ticket.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative My-Linh Thai, Prime Sponsor; Bob Ellis, citizen.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.