

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

**ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1784**

Chapter 130, Laws of 2022

67th Legislature  
2022 Regular Session

VEHICLE LICENSE PLATE VISIBILITY—CARGO CARRYING DEVICES

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 9, 2022

Passed by the House February 15, 2022  
Yeas 96 Nays 1

LAURIE JINKINS

**Speaker of the House of  
Representatives**

Passed by the Senate March 3, 2022  
Yeas 48 Nays 0

DENNY HECK

**President of the Senate**

Approved March 24, 2022 8:49 AM

JAY INSLEE

**Governor of the State of Washington**

CERTIFICATE

I, Bernard Dean, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1784** as passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on the dates hereon set forth.

BERNARD DEAN

**Chief Clerk**

FILED

March 24, 2022

**Secretary of State  
State of Washington**

---

**ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1784**

---

Passed Legislature - 2022 Regular Session

**State of Washington**

**67th Legislature**

**2022 Regular Session**

**By** Representative Thai

Prefiled 01/05/22. Read first time 01/10/22. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing an exception to the requirement  
2 that vehicle license plates be visible at all times for vehicles  
3 using certain cargo carrying devices; and reenacting and amending RCW  
4 46.16A.200.

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

6 **Sec. 1.** RCW 46.16A.200 and 2014 c 181 s 2 and 2014 c 80 s 1 are  
7 each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

19 (e) Must be of a size and color and show the registration period  
20 as 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  
5 symbol 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  
13 making satisfactory application for a vehicle registration:

14 (i) Two identical license plates each containing the license  
15 plate number; or

16 (ii) One license plate if the vehicle is a trailer, semitrailer,  
17 camper, moped, collector vehicle, horseless carriage, or motorcycle.

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

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

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

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

25 (iii) Kept clean and be able to be plainly seen and read at all  
26 times unless an exception in (b) of this subsection applies; and

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

29 (b) (i) The Washington state patrol may grant exceptions to this  
30 subsection if the body construction of the vehicle makes compliance  
31 with this section impossible.

32 (ii) If the applicable requirements of (b)(iii) of this  
33 subsection are met, the display of a single license plate properly  
34 attached to a vehicle that has two license plates properly attached  
35 in accordance with (a)(i) of this subsection may be temporarily  
36 obstructed by one or more of the following devices or by the cargo  
37 the device is carrying:

38 (A) A trailer hitch;

39 (B) A wheelchair lift or wheelchair carrier;

1 (C) A trailer being towed by the vehicle, provided the trailer  
2 meets any applicable trailer license plate requirements under this  
3 chapter; or

4 (D) A bicycle rack, ski rack, or luggage rack.

5 (iii) The obstruction of a single license plate under (b) (ii) or  
6 (b) (iv) of this subsection is only authorized if the following  
7 requirements are met:

8 (A) The device is installed according to manufacturer  
9 specifications or generally accepted installation practices; and

10 (B) The device or cargo the device is carrying does not prevent  
11 the license plate from being read from one or more accessible viewing  
12 angles when the vehicle is parked, except if the device is a trailer  
13 that meets the trailer license plate requirements under this chapter.

14 (iv) If the applicable requirements of (b) (iii) of this  
15 subsection are met, the display of a single license plate attached to  
16 a trailer in accordance with (a) (ii) of this subsection and meeting  
17 any applicable trailer license plate requirements under this chapter  
18 may be obstructed by a device for transporting a forklift used for  
19 product delivery purposes. For purposes of license plate visibility,  
20 the single trailer license plate obstructed by a device for carrying  
21 a forklift may be relocated on the trailer or the towing vehicle to a  
22 position that is more than four feet from the ground.

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

26 (a) Surrender the current license plate or plates to the  
27 department, county auditor or other agent, or subagent appointed by  
28 the director;

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

30 (c) Pay a change of classification fee required under RCW  
31 46.17.310.

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

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

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

37 (c) Use holders, frames, or other materials that change, alter,  
38 or make a license plate or plates illegible. License plate frames may  
39 be used on license plates only if the frames do not obscure license

1 tabs or identifying letters or numbers on the plates and the license  
2 plates can be plainly seen and read at all times;

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

5 (e) Transfer a license plate or plates issued under this chapter  
6 between two or more vehicles without first making application to  
7 transfer the license plates. A violation of this subsection (7)(e) is  
8 a traffic infraction subject to a fine not to exceed five hundred  
9 dollars. Any law enforcement agency that determines that a license  
10 plate or plates have been transferred between two or more vehicles  
11 shall confiscate the license plate or plates and return them to the  
12 department for nullification along with full details of the reasons  
13 for confiscation. Each vehicle identified in the transfer will be  
14 issued a new license plate or plates upon application by the owner or  
15 owners and the payment of full fees and taxes; or

16 (f) Fail, neglect, or refuse to endorse the registration  
17 certificate, except as authorized under this section.

18 (8) **Transfer.** (a) Standard issue license plates must be replaced  
19 when ownership of the vehicle changes, pursuant to subsection  
20 (9)(a)(i) of this section, but the registered owner may retain the  
21 license plates and transfer them to a replacement vehicle of the same  
22 use. In addition to all other taxes and fees due upon change in  
23 ownership, a registered owner wishing to keep standard issue license  
24 plates shall pay the license plate transfer fee required under RCW  
25 46.17.200(1)(c) when applying for license plate transfer.

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

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

33 (d) License plate replacement is not required when a change in  
34 vehicle ownership is the result of one or more of the following  
35 circumstances:

36 (i) When adding a lienholder to the certificate of title or  
37 removing a lienholder from the certificate of title;

38 (ii) When a vehicle is transferred from one spouse or registered  
39 domestic partner to another;

1 (iii) When removing a deceased spouse or registered domestic  
2 partner from the certificate of title;

3 (iv) When a vehicle is transferred by gift or inheritance to one  
4 or more members of the registered owner's immediate family;

5 (v) When a vehicle is transferred into or out of a trust in which  
6 the registered owner or one or more immediate family members of the  
7 registered owner is the beneficiary;

8 (vi) When a leaseholder buys out the leased vehicle; or

9 (vii) When a person changes his or her name.

10 (9) **Replacement.** (a) Except as provided in subsection (8)(a) of  
11 this section, an owner or the owner's authorized representative must  
12 apply for a replacement license plate or plates: (i) When taking  
13 ownership of the vehicle; (ii) if the current license plate or plates  
14 assigned to the vehicle have been lost, defaced, or destroyed; or  
15 (iii) if one or both plates have become so illegible or are in such a  
16 condition as to be difficult to distinguish. An owner or the owner's  
17 authorized representative may apply for a replacement license plate  
18 or plates at any time the owner chooses. The department shall offer  
19 to owners the option of retaining the current license plate number  
20 when obtaining replacement license plates for the fee required in RCW  
21 46.17.200(1)(b).

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

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

25 (ii) Be accompanied by the fee required under RCW  
26 46.17.200(1)(a).

27 (c) When a vehicle is sold to a vehicle dealer for resale, the  
28 application for a replacement plate or plates need not be made until  
29 the vehicle is sold by the vehicle dealer.

30 (d) The department shall not require the payment of any fee to  
31 replace a license plate or plates for vehicles owned, rented, or  
32 leased by foreign countries or international bodies to which the  
33 United States government is a signatory by treaty.

34 (10) **Replacement—Exceptions.** The following license plates are not  
35 required to be replaced as required in subsection (9) of this  
36 section:

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

39 (b) Medal of Honor license plates issued under RCW 46.18.230;

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

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

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

Passed by the House February 15, 2022.

Passed by the Senate March 3, 2022.

Approved by the Governor March 24, 2022.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State March 24, 2022.

--- END ---