

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5910

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As of January 25, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to creating the state department of natural resources' Smokey Bear special license plates.

**Brief Description:** Creating the state department of natural resources' Smokey Bear special license plates.

**Sponsors:** Senators Nobles, Holy, Conway, Lovick, Saldaña, Short, Trudeau and Wilson, J.; by request of Department of Natural Resources.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 1/25/24.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates the Smokey Bear special license plate.
- Directs proceeds from the special license plate to the Department of Natural Resources to use for wildfire prevention programs.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Bryon Moore (786-7726)

**Background:** The Department of Licensing (DOL) issues special vehicle license plates that may be used in lieu of standard plates. A governmental or nonprofit sponsoring organization seeking to sponsor a special plate either submits an application to DOL or requests legislation to create the special plate.

Under the DOL application method, the application packet must include the design of the special license plate, proof of 3500 signatures in support of the special license plate, and a start-up fee of \$6,300. For special license plates enacted by the Legislature, a sponsoring

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organization must submit prepayment of all start-up costs to DOL within 30 days of enactment.

The sponsoring organization seeking to sponsor the special plate is required to reimburse DOL for the costs of establishing the new special plate. If the sponsoring organization is not able to meet the prepayment requirement, revenues generated from the sale of the special license plate are first used to pay off any costs associated with establishing the new plate. The sponsoring organization must also provide a proposed license plate design to DOL. The sponsoring organization must submit an annual financial report to DOL detailing actual revenues generated from the sale of the special license plate. The reports are reviewed, approved, and presented to the Joint Transportation Committee.

DOL collects special license plate fees, and for administrative expenses, deducts an amount not to exceed \$12 for new plate issuance and \$2 for renewal. After these expenses are paid the state treasurer deposits the proceeds into the Motor Vehicle Account until DOL determines the start-up costs for a special license plate are paid. After that point, all remaining proceeds go to the sponsoring organization.

**Summary of Bill:** The Smokey Bear special license plate is created. In addition to all fees and taxes required to be paid upon application for a vehicle registration, a fee of \$40 is charged for the original issuance of a Smokey Bear special license plate, and a \$30 fee is charged for the renewal of the plate.

Revenue from the sale of the special license plates is deposited in the Wildfire Response, Forest Restoration, and Community Resilience Account for the Department of Natural Resources to use for wildfire prevention programs.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on October 1, 2024.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: There is no more iconic figure than Smokey the Bear when it comes to wildfire prevention. His message of "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires" still resonates today. Wildfires represent a clear and present danger to people and structures. Fire suppression costs and the number of people with homes at risk continue to increase. The new special license plate being available will allow people to promote the importance of reducing wildfires and will allow the recognition of the firefighters that are literally putting their lives at risk to protect us. The promotional efforts funded with this revenue will allow the expansion and reinforcement of the message about the importance of individuals taking action to prevent wildfires, particularly since most fires are caused by

humans. These efforts are aimed at reducing wildfires and maintaining access for recreation and other purposes. Expanded education efforts are in large part what the bill is about.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator T'wina Nobles, Prime Sponsor; Joan Fleming, Back Country Horsemen of Washington; Hilary Franz, Department of Natural Resources; Cristina Gonzalez.

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