

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5444

As of February 10, 2025

Title: An act relating to creating several new special license plates.

Brief Description: Creating several new special license plates.

Sponsors: Senators Cortes, Chapman, Lovick, Nobles, Riccelli and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/10/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Keep Washington Evergreen special license plate, the LeMay-America's Car Museum special license plate, the Mount St. Helens special license plate, the Nautical Northwest special license plate, the Smokey Bear special license plate, the Working Forests special license plate, and the State Sport special license plate.
- Establishes both original and renewal fees for the special license plates.
- Directs proceeds from the special license plates for various purposes.

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

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start-up fee of \$6,300. For special license plates enacted by the Legislature, a sponsoring 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 following seven special license plates are created:

- LeMay-America's Car Museum;
- Mount St. Helens;
- Keep Washington Evergreen;
- Nautical Northwest;
- Smokey Bear;
- Working Forests; and
- State Sport.

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 one of the special license plates, and a \$30 fee is charged for the renewal of one of the plates. Revenue from the sale of the different special license plates will be distributed as shown in the table below.

<u>Special License Plate</u>	<u>Recipient of Funds and Purpose</u>
LeMay-America's Car Museum	Education and job training related to automobiles.
Mount St. Helens	The Mount St. Helens Institute; to promote education, stewardship, and science at Mount St. Helens.
Keep Washington Evergreen	Electric Vehicle Account; for the support of electric charging stations throughout Washington.
Nautical Northwest	To support of historic resources of Whidbey Island's maritime

	communities.
Smokey Bear	The Department of Natural Resources wildfire prevention programs.
Working Forests	The Washington Tree Farm Program; to support small forest landowners.
State Sport	Seattle Metro Pickleball Association to be used exclusively for the construction and maintenance of dedicated pickleball courts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on November 1, 2025.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The possibility of a pickleball license plate continues to energize players around the state and would allow the pickleball community to support the creation and maintenance of courts for clubs and groups across Washington. The new LeMay Museum plate will help fund the museum's programs, aimed at inspiring students and the community to understand the role of the automobile and our culture and our economy. The Smokey Bear license plate has been proposed before and hopefully we can get it passed this year for additional support of wildfire prevention and related education programs. The Mount St. Helens plate will support education, stewardship, and science at Mount St. Helens Institute. The Nautical Northwest plate will support Whidbey Island and maritime communities. The working forecast plate will support small forest landowners to sustainably manage over 400,000 acres of private forest land and provide an opportunity to raise awareness for tree farming and working forests.

OTHER: The Seahawks organization requests consideration of amendment that would change Seahawks license plate proceeds so that 75 percent go to the team affiliated foundation and 25 percent to the Washington State Leadership Board.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Adrian Cortes, Prime Sponsor; John Rankin, Seattle Metro Pickleball Association; Heather Monti, Mount St. Helens Institute; Michael Transue, LeMay - America's Car Museum; Keith Townsend, Working Forest License Plate; Pat Sullivan, Department of Natural Resources; Karissa Lowe, Mt. St. Helens Institute.

OTHER: Drew Johnston, Seattle Seahawks.

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