

HOUSE BILL NO. 840
INTRODUCED BY E. HILBERT

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ALLOWING FOR GENERIC SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES FOR TRAILERS OVER 2,000 POUNDS GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT; ALLOWING FOR PERMANENT REGISTRATION USING SPECIALTY PLATES; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 61-3-332, 61-3-479, 61-3-481, AND 61-3-562, MCA."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 61-3-332, MCA, is amended to read:

"61-3-332. Standard license plates. (1) In addition to special license plates, collegiate license plates, generic specialty license plates, and fleet license plates authorized under this chapter, a separate series of standard license plates must be issued for motor vehicles, quadricycles, travel trailers, trailers, semitrailers, and pole trailers registered in this state or offered for sale by a vehicle dealer licensed in this state. Standard license plates issued to licensed vehicle dealers must be readily distinguishable from license plates issued to vehicles owned by other persons.

(2) (a) Except as provided in 61-3-479 and subsections (2)(b), (3)(c), and (3)(d) of this section, all standard license plates for motor vehicles, trailers, semitrailers, or pole trailers must be issued for a minimum period of 4 years, bear a distinctive marking, as determined by the department, and be furnished by the department. In years when standard license plates are not issued, the department shall provide a registration decal that must be affixed to the rear license plate of the vehicle.

(b) For light vehicles that are permanently registered as provided in 61-3-562 and motor vehicles described in 61-3-303(9) that are permanently registered, the department shall provide a distinctive registration decal indicating that the motor vehicle is permanently registered. The registration decal must be affixed to the rear license plate of the permanently registered motor vehicle.

(3) (a) Subject to the provisions of this section, the department shall create a new design for standard license plates as provided in this section, and it shall manufacture the newly designed standard license plates for issuance after December 31, 2005, to replace at renewal, as required in 61-3-312, standard license plates that were displayed on motor vehicles before that date.

(b) Beginning January 1, 2006, the department shall manufacture and issue new standard license plates

after the existing plates have been used for a minimum period of 4 years.

(c) A motor vehicle that is registered for a 13-month to a 24-month period, as provided in 61-3-311 and 61-3-321(2), may display the license plate and plate design in effect at the time of registration for the entire registration period.

(d) A light vehicle described in subsection (2)(b) or a motor home that is permanently registered may display the license plate and plate design in effect at the time of registration for the entire period that the light vehicle or motor home is permanently registered.

(4) For passenger motor vehicles, ~~and trucks, and trailers over 2,000 pounds gross vehicle weight,~~ plates must be of metal 6 inches wide and 12 inches in length. Except for generic specialty license plates, the outline of the state of Montana must be used as a distinctive border on all license plates, and the word "Montana" must be placed on each license plate. All license plates must be treated with a reflectorized background material according to specifications prescribed by the department.

(5) The distinctive registration numbers for standard license plates must begin with a number one or with a letter-number combination, such as "A 1" or "AA 1", or any other similar combination of letters and numbers. Except for special license plates, collegiate license plates, generic specialty license plates, and fleet license plates, the distinctive registration number or letter-number combination assigned to the motor vehicle must appear on the plate preceded by the number of the county and appearing in horizontal order on the same horizontal baseline. The county number must be separated from the distinctive registration number by a separation mark unless a letter-number combination is used. The dimensions of the numerals and letters must be determined by the department, and all county and registration numbers must be of equal height.

(6) For the use of exempt motor vehicles, trailers, semitrailers, or pole trailers and motor vehicles, trailers, semitrailers, or pole trailers that are exempt from the registration fee as provided in 61-3-321, in addition to the markings provided in this section, standard license plates must bear the following distinctive markings:

(a) For motor vehicles, trailers, semitrailers, or pole trailers owned by the state, the department may designate the prefix number for the various state departments. All numbered plates issued to state departments must bear the words "State Owned", and a year number may not be indicated on the plates because these numbered plates are of a permanent nature and will be replaced by the department only when the physical condition of numbered plates requires it.

(b) For motor vehicles, trailers, semitrailers, or pole trailers that are owned by the counties, municipalities, and special districts, as defined in 18-8-202, organized under the laws of Montana and not operating for profit, and that are used and operated by officials and employees in the line of duty and for motor

vehicles on loan from the United States government or the state of Montana to, or owned by, the civil air patrol and used and operated by officials and employees in the line of duty, there must be placed on the standard license plates assigned, in a position that the department may designate, the letter "X" or the word "EXEMPT". Distinctive registration numbers for plates assigned to motor vehicles, trailers, semitrailers, or pole trailers of each of the counties in the state and those of the municipalities and special districts that obtain plates within each county must begin with number one and be numbered consecutively. Because these standard license plates are of a permanent nature, they are subject to replacement by the department only when the physical condition of the license plates requires it and a year number may not be displayed on the plates.

(7) For the purpose of this chapter, the several counties of the state are assigned numbers as follows: Silver Bow, 1; Cascade, 2; Yellowstone, 3; Missoula, 4; Lewis and Clark, 5; Gallatin, 6; Flathead, 7; Fergus, 8; Powder River, 9; Carbon, 10; Phillips, 11; Hill, 12; Ravalli, 13; Custer, 14; Lake, 15; Dawson, 16; Roosevelt, 17; Beaverhead, 18; Chouteau, 19; Valley, 20; Toole, 21; Big Horn, 22; Musselshell, 23; Blaine, 24; Madison, 25; Pondera, 26; Richland, 27; Powell, 28; Rosebud, 29; Deer Lodge, 30; Teton, 31; Stillwater, 32; Treasure, 33; Sheridan, 34; Sanders, 35; Judith Basin, 36; Daniels, 37; Glacier, 38; Fallon, 39; Sweet Grass, 40; McCone, 41; Carter, 42; Broadwater, 43; Wheatland, 44; Prairie, 45; Granite, 46; Meagher, 47; Liberty, 48; Park, 49; Garfield, 50; Jefferson, 51; Wibaux, 52; Golden Valley, 53; Mineral, 54; Petroleum, 55; Lincoln, 56. Any new counties must be assigned numbers by the department as they are formed, beginning with the number 57.

(8) Each type of special license plate approved by the legislature, except collegiate license plates authorized in 61-3-463 and generic specialty license plates authorized in 61-3-472 through 61-3-481, must be a separate series of plates, numbered as provided in subsection (5), except that the county number must be replaced by a nonremovable design or decal designating the group or organization to which the applicant belongs. Unless otherwise specifically stated in this section, the special plates are subject to the same rules and laws as govern the issuance of regular license plates, must be placed or mounted on a motor vehicle, trailer, semitrailer, or pole trailer owned by the person who is eligible to receive them, with the registration decal affixed to the rear license plate of the motor vehicle, trailer, semitrailer, or pole trailer, and must be removed upon sale or other disposition of the motor vehicle, trailer, semitrailer, or pole trailer.

(9) (a) A Montana resident who is eligible to receive a special parking permit under 49-4-301 may, upon written application on a form prescribed by the department, be issued a special license plate with a design or decal bearing a representation of a wheelchair as the symbol of a person with a disability.

(b) If the motor vehicle to which the license plate is attached is permanently registered, the owner of the motor vehicle shall provide, upon request of a person authorized to enforce special parking laws or ordinances

in this or any state, evidence of continued eligibility to use the license plate in the form of a valid special parking permit issued to or renewed by the vehicle owner under 49-4-304 and 49-4-305.

(c) A person with a permanent condition, as provided in 49-4-301(2)(b), who has been issued a special license plate upon written application, as provided in this subsection (9), is not required to reapply upon reregistration of the motor vehicle.

(10) The provisions of this section do not apply to a motor vehicle, trailer, semitrailer, or pole trailer that is registered as part of a fleet, as defined in 61-3-712, and that is subject to the provisions of 61-3-711 through 61-3-733."

Section 2. Section 61-3-479, MCA, is amended to read:

"61-3-479. Issuance of generic specialty license plates -- qualifications. (1) (a) Except as provided in subsection (1)(b), the department shall issue a set of generic specialty license plates to a person who applies for a particular style of generic specialty license plates and pays the donation fee established by the plate sponsor and the administrative fee required in 61-3-480.

(b) If the sponsor of a generic specialty license plate is not listed on the county collection report published by the state and required under 15-1-504 as of the initial distribution date for the sale of the sponsor's plates, the department shall require the sponsor to collect the initial donation fee from, and issue a special certificate of registration to, a person who is eligible to receive the sponsor's generic specialty license plates. The person shall present the special certificate of registration upon application for the generic specialty license plates.

(2) A set of generic specialty license plates may be issued for any motor vehicle ~~except a trailer of any size~~ 2,000 pounds or less gross vehicle weight, a motorcycle, or a quadricycle.

(3) (a) Except as provided in 61-3-472 through 61-3-481 and 61-3-562, a person who receives generic specialty license plates is subject to the same rules and laws as those that govern standard license plates.

(b) Except as provided in 61-3-472 through 61-3-481 and 61-3-562, the department is subject to the same rules and laws that govern the issuance of standard license plates.

(c) Generic specialty license plates issued under 61-3-472 through 61-3-481 are not subject to any maximum issuance or use limitation that may be imposed on standard license plates.

(4) A person may combine an application for a generic specialty license plate with an application for a license plate with a design bearing a representation of a wheelchair as the symbol of a person with a disability as provided in 61-3-332(9)."

Section 3. Section 61-3-481, MCA, is amended to read:

"61-3-481. Generic specialty license plates -- restrictions on use. (1) Generic specialty license plates may be issued by the department in conjunction with the registration of any motor vehicle except a trailer ~~of any size~~ 2,000 pounds or less gross vehicle weight, a motorcycle, or a quadricycle. The department may not issue generic specialty license plates without the motor vehicle having been registered.

(2) Generic specialty license plates may be used only as the official license plates for a motor vehicle."

Section 4. Section 61-3-562, MCA, is amended to read:

"61-3-562. Permanent registration -- transfer of light vehicle ownership -- rules. (1) (a) ~~Except as provided in subsection (1)(b), the~~ The owner of a light vehicle 11 years old or older subject to the registration fee, as provided in 61-3-321(2), may permanently register the light vehicle upon payment of a \$87.50 registration fee, the applicable registration and license fees under 61-3-412, and an amount equal to five times the applicable fees imposed for each of the following:

(i) the local option motor vehicle tax or flat fee on vehicles under 61-3-537; and

(ii) if applicable, renewal fees for personalized plates under 61-3-406.

(b) The following series of license plates may ~~not~~ be used for purposes of permanent registration of a light vehicle:

(i) Montana national guard license plates issued under 61-3-458(2)(b);

(ii) reserve armed forces license plates issued under 61-3-458(2)(c);

(iii) amateur radio operator license plates issued under 61-3-422;

(iv) collegiate license plates issued under 61-3-465; and

(v) generic specialty license plates issued under 61-3-479.

(2) In addition to the fees described in subsection (1), an owner of a truck with a manufacturer's rated capacity of 1 ton or less that is permanently registered shall pay five times the applicable fees imposed under 61-10-201.

(3) The owner of a motor vehicle that is permanently registered under this section is not subject to additional registration fees or to other motor vehicle registration fees described in this section for as long as the owner owns the vehicle.

(4) The county treasurer shall once each month remit to the state the amounts collected under this section, other than the local option motor vehicle tax or flat fee, for the purposes of 61-3-321(2) and 61-10-201. The county treasurer shall retain the local option motor vehicle tax or flat fee.

(5) (a) The permanent registration of a light vehicle allowed by this section may not be transferred to a new owner. If the light vehicle is transferred to a new owner, the department shall cancel the light vehicle's permanent registration.

(b) Upon transfer of a light vehicle registered under this section to a new owner, the new owner shall apply for a certificate of title under 61-3-201 and 61-3-216 and register the light vehicle under 61-3-303."

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