

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2024 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Third Reader**

Senate Bill 55

(Senators Smith and James)

Judicial Proceedings

Environment and Transportation

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**Vehicle Laws - Disabled Veteran Registration Plates - Issuance**

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This bill authorizes the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) to issue a special disabled veteran registration plate to an individual who is between 50% and 99%, inclusive, service-connected disabled, as designated or classified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). MVA is authorized to adopt regulations to govern the issuance of the special disabled veteran registration plates.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Although additional special registration plates may be issued under the bill, Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) revenues and expenditures are not materially affected as newly qualifying individuals are not exempt from vehicle registration fees and MVA has a supply of plates available. The bill's fee exemptions for replacement plates likely have no material effect on TTF revenues. Reprogramming changes can be handled with existing resources.

**Local Effect:** The bill does not affect local government finances or operations.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** To be eligible to receive the plate, the vehicle for which the plate is to be affixed must be a Class A (passenger), Class E (truck with a rated capacity of one ton or less), Class M (multipurpose), or Class D (motorcycle) vehicle.

An applicant must provide satisfactory proof to MVA that the individual is a U.S. Armed Forces veteran who is between 50% and 99%, inclusive, service-connected disabled as designated or classified by the VA. Additionally, the bill authorizes MVA to issue a special disabled veteran registration plate that does not display the [international symbol of access](#) to a qualified applicant.

Special disabled veteran registration plates issued under the bill may consist of any combination of letters, numerals, or both and must state “Disabled Veteran” on the plates.

#### *Issuance of Plate and Transfer Provisions*

MVA must charge the annual registration fee and surcharge otherwise required by State law for special disabled veteran registration plates issued pursuant to the bill’s authorization and may not charge (or retain) any additional fee for the plates.

*Transfers (Generally):* If the ownership of a motor vehicle assigned special disabled veteran registration plates under the bill is transferred from the qualified disabled veteran to an individual who does not qualify for the plates, the transferor must return the plates to MVA and the transferee must obtain vehicle title, registration, and registration plates as required by law. However, if the transferor and the transferee were joint owners of the vehicle before the transfer, MVA may not charge the transferee the fee otherwise required for replacement plates.

*Transfers Between Spouses:* If the ownership of a motor vehicle assigned special disabled veteran registration plates under the bill is transferred from the qualified disabled veteran to the disabled veteran’s spouse who does not qualify for the plates, the transferor must return the plates to MVA and the transferee must obtain vehicle title, registration, and registration plates as required by law. MVA may not charge the transferee the fee otherwise required for replacement plates.

**Current Law:** The contribution of the U.S. Armed Forces is recognized through several provisions within the Maryland Vehicle Law. Specifically, Maryland has exemptions from registration fees for veterans with certain disabilities and vehicles owned by national veterans’ organizations as well as special registration plates for honorably discharged veterans; recipients of individually earned, combat-related U.S. Armed Forces medals; and recipients of a U.S. Department of Defense Gold Star indicating status as a surviving spouse, parent, or next of kin of a member of the U.S. Armed Forces who lost his or her life in combat.

Most classes of vehicle are currently registered biennially, although some less common classes are registered on an annual basis. Registration fees also include a yearly \$17.00 surcharge for the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services System. A

portion of that surcharge (\$2.50) is reserved for the Trauma Physician Services Fund. MVA advised for a prior introduction of the bill that, under current practice, if an individual presents documentation from the VA showing the individual is 100% disabled, the individual is not subject to a registration fee.

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### **Additional Information**

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 250 of 2023.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 178 (Delegate Griffith) - Environment and Transportation.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 28, 2024  
rh/ljm Third Reader - March 14, 2024

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