

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 444

(Senator Colburn)

Judicial Proceedings

Environmental Matters

Motor Vehicles - Special Registration Plates for Veterans - Use After Vehicle Transfer

This bill authorizes the continued use of a special registration plate for a veteran in the case where the title or ownership of a vehicle jointly owned by a married couple is transferred to one of the spouses. This would allow a surviving spouse to use a special registration plate after the death of an eligible veteran.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not materially affect State operations and would not affect expenditures.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: A recipient of a combat-related, individually earned armed services medal may apply to the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) for special registration plates for a Class A (passenger) vehicle, a Class E (truck) vehicle with one ton of capacity or less, a Class M (multipurpose) vehicle, or a Class D (motorcycle) vehicle. The applicant must provide proof of the receipt of the medal or proof of an honorable discharge from the armed services, if the applicant has separated. The applicant must pay an additional fee for the registration plates. The registration plates must depict an emblem or logo that depicts the medal or indicates honorable discharge. The MVA must

set a registration fee, in addition to the annual registration fee, for such plates to recover costs incurred by the MVA for providing the plates. That fee is not credited to the Gasoline and Motor Vehicle Revenue Account; as such, it is not shared with local governments.

Maryland offers special military related plates for: service in the Asiatic Pacific, the Southeast Asia service medal, the Korean service medal, the Vietnam service medal, and World War II veterans. It also offers plates for being honorably discharged, and for receiving the Bronze Star, the Combat Infantry Badge, the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Purple Heart, or the Silver Star.

Background: Almost all states have some kind of registration plate specifically for veterans who have received some kind of combat award. Many states also offer special registration plates for veterans of various wars such as Vietnam, Korea, World War II, disabled veterans, former prisoners of war, and Pearl Harbor. For example:

- Maine provides decals for all five branches of the Armed Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard), as well as (among others) decals for the Coast Guard Medal, the Silver Star, the Air Force Cross, the Soldier's Medal, the Navy Marine Medal, the Airman's Medal, the Kosovo campaign, and the War on Terrorism (Iraq and Afghanistan);
- Idaho offers plates for all veterans and specialized plates for disabled veterans, recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor, former prisoners of war, Pearl Harbor survivors, the Purple Heart, and military reservists and members of the National Guard;
- Texas offers license plates for (among others): members of the U.S. Army Airborne Parachutists, Desert Storm veterans, Distinguished Flying Cross Medals, Gold Star Mothers, the Texas Guard, and all branches of the Armed Services; and
- North Carolina offers plates for Veterans of Foreign Wars; the 82nd Airborne; retired military; and Vietnam, Korea, and World War II veterans, as well as for recipients of the Bronze Star, Legion of Valor, Distinguished Flying Cross, and Congressional Medal of Honor.

At least two states (Texas and Mississippi) have passed legislation specifically authorizing widows and widowers of recipients of some types of special plates to keep them as a valid registration for use on a vehicle.

The MVA advises that, while surviving spouses are required to surrender a veteran's special registration plate, on occasion surviving spouses have been allowed to retain the

special registration plate. The MVA advised that as of February 6, 2006, there were 3,277 active combat medal registrations. The MVA was not able to provide more current information.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 856 (Delegate Boteler, *et al.*) – Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Texas Office of the Attorney General, Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Idaho Transportation Department, North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles, Arizona Department of Veteran's Services, Mississippi Legislature, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

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