

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1425

(Chair, Environmental Matters Committee)

(By Request – Departmental – Veterans Affairs)

Environmental Matters

Judicial Proceedings

Vehicle Laws - Gold Star Registration Plates

This departmental bill establishes a special registration plate available exclusively for a recipient 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 armed forces who lost his/her life in combat.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2008.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: No net effect. Transportation Trust Fund revenues would increase slightly due to the additional initial registration fee. TTF expenditures would increase slightly due to the cost of producing Gold Star registration plates.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: The Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). Legislative Services concurs with this assessment.

Analysis

Bill Summary: An applicant for a Gold Star special registration plate has to provide satisfactory proof to the Motor Vehicle Administration that he or she is the recipient of a U.S. Department of Defense Gold Star. In addition to the annual registration fee

otherwise required, the applicant must submit a fee each time new registration plates are issued for the vehicle. MVA is to calculate the fee so as to recover the costs incurred in implementing the bill's requirements.

The special registration plate must contain an emblem or logo indicating that the registration plate holder is a Gold Star recipient.

Current Law: A recipient of a combat-related, individually earned armed services medal may apply to 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, and 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 contain an emblem or logo that depicts the medal awarded or words or an emblem or logo indicating the honorable discharge, as appropriate.

The additional fee collected is not to be credited to the Gasoline and Motor Vehicle Revenue Account; as such, it is not shared with local governments.

Background: Twenty states, including Pennsylvania and Virginia have begun issuing Gold Star registration plates to the family members of individuals who have died while serving in the armed forces of the United States.

From World War II to present, approximately 6,000 Marylanders have been casualties of war.

State Fiscal Effect: Although TTF revenues and expenditures would increase beginning in fiscal 2009, the bill would have no net fiscal impact due to the requirement that MVA recover the costs associated with producing the registration plates. MVA advises that only minimal additional resources would be required to produce this plate due to similarities with existing military special registration plates. MVA anticipates a small volume of Gold Star special registration plates and notes that only approximately 360 military plates are issued annually. The current additional registration fee set to recover the cost of producing these military plates is \$25.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Veterans Affairs, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

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