

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2012 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

House Bill 585

(Delegate Elliott, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

---

**Vehicle Laws - Single Registration Plate - Specified Vehicles**

---

This bill establishes an exemption from the requirement that a vehicle have two registration plates that applies to a vehicle that was manufactured without a means to secure and display a front registration plate. Such vehicles may instead display only a single plate in the rear of the vehicle. The Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) must adopt regulations used to verify which vehicles may be subject to the exemption under the bill for purposes of issuing registration plates and for law enforcement.

---

**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) expenditures decrease, likely minimally, due to reduced postage and production costs associated with the issuance of only a single-registration plate for some vehicles. General fund revenues decrease, likely minimally, due to a reduction in the number of penalties collected for driving with one registration plate.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

---

**Analysis**

**Current Law:** All vehicles are required to display two registration plates, unless they are in one of three vehicle classes. Class D (motorcycle), Class F (tractor), and Class G (trailer) vehicles are exempt from the two-registration plate requirement. Class F vehicles are required to display the registration plate on the front of the vehicle.

Historic and antique vehicles must display current registration plates in the places provided on the vehicle. In addition, MVA must issue only one plate for vehicles with temporary registration.

Each registration plate must display the name of the State and the registration number assigned to the vehicle. After the plates have been issued, MVA may order their continued use in subsequent registration years and must issue a validation tab to show payment of the vehicle registration fee.

An owner of a motor vehicle may not drive the vehicle or permit the vehicle to be driven on any highway in Maryland without validated registration plates, unless otherwise expressly authorized by MVA. Expired registration plates may not be displayed. A violation of these provisions is a misdemeanor, subject to a fine of up to \$500 or a prepayment fine of \$70.

**Background:** Because a number of states do not require the display of two license plates on vehicles, some manufacturers provide brackets or other means of affixing registration plates to dealers or vehicle owners rather than incorporating permanent features for placement of registration plates, such as an indentation to the bumper. However, older vehicles and some specialty vehicles may have been designed without a registration plate incorporated in the design and without additional parts available from the manufacturer to attach registration plates. The owners of such vehicles may be required to purchase additional after-market parts from third-party automotive suppliers if available, or attach the registration plate without additional automotive parts designed for this purpose.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 19 states, including Delaware, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, allow one registration plate to be issued for some vehicle classes. The remaining 31 states require two plates. Several states only require one plate for certain types of vehicles such as motorcycles, trailers, or all terrain vehicles.

**State Fiscal Effect:** A reliable estimate of the decrease in TTF expenditures associated with issuing only one registration plate for some vehicles and of the decrease in general fund revenues from fewer violations cannot be estimated at this time without additional information as to which vehicles will be eligible for only one registration plate. The bill requires MVA to establish regulations to determine which vehicles qualify for the exemption from the requirement to possess two registration plates. Assuming the regulations adopted by MVA apply only to a limited number of vehicle models and types, the savings that would accrue from the issuance and mailing of fewer registration plates is expected to be minimal. Additionally, general fund penalty revenues may decrease

minimally to the extent that a minimal number of vehicles currently issued citations for violating the requirement to display two registration plates would qualify under the bill to lawfully display only one plate.

---

### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention, Department of State Police, Maryland Department of Transportation, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 2, 2012  
ncs/ljm

---

Analysis by: Evan M. Isaacson

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510