

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 227
(Senator Ellis)
Judicial Proceedings

Motor Vehicles – Parking – Disabled Veteran Special Registration Plates

This bill prohibits a political subdivision from adopting or enforcing an ordinance, regulation, or policy requiring the payment of a fee for parking a motor vehicle in an on-street parking space served by a parking meter if the motor vehicle has disabled veteran special registration plates. The bill also prohibits a State agency from adopting or enforcing a regulation or policy requiring the payment of a fee for parking a motor vehicle in a parking lot owned or controlled by the State agency if the vehicle has disabled veteran special registration plates.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Transportation Trust Fund (TTF) revenues decrease due to reduced collection of parking fees at State-owned facilities. TTF expenditures increase for the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) to modify automated parking systems and/or provide additional staffing at parking gates at Baltimore-Washington International (BWI) Thurgood Marshall Airport, the BWI Marshall Amtrak station, and Cruise Maryland Terminal.

Local Effect: Local government revenues decline minimally in jurisdictions that own and operate parking meters. Any changes to enforcement can likely be handled with existing resources, though some jurisdictions may incur minor costs for system modifications. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

Small Business Effect: Potential minimal.

Analysis

Current Law:

Power of Political Subdivisions and State Agencies to Regulate Parking

Generally, any State agency authorized by law and any political subdivision of the State may adopt ordinances or regulations that:

- regulate the parking of vehicles;
- provide for the impounding of vehicles parked in violation of the ordinances or regulations;
- regulate the towing of vehicles from publicly owned and privately owned parking lots; and
- provide for the issuance of a citation by an officer for a violation of an ordinance or regulation that is adopted pursuant to this authorization.

Special Registration Plates for Disabled Veterans

The contribution of the U.S. Armed Forces is recognized through several provisions within the Maryland Vehicle Law. Most recently, under Chapters 472 and 473 of 2024, the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) may 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). The plate is available for specified common classes of vehicles, and an applicant must provide satisfactory proof to MVA that the individual is a U.S. Armed Forces veteran who meets the service-connected disabled requirements. These plates *do not* display the international symbol of access (often referred to as the wheelchair symbol) to a qualified applicant; however, “Disabled Veteran” appears at the bottom of the plate. While MVA does not charge a fee for these plates, registration fees do apply.

In addition, a disabled veteran who can provide documentation from the VA proving 100% disability can receive a special registration plate free of charge. Such an applicant is also not subject to a registration fee. These 100% disabled veteran special registration plates contain the international symbol of access (wheelchair symbol) and have the same parking meter privileges as special disability registration plates. Accordingly, vehicles with such plates may be exempt from paying any parking meter fees of the State – or any political subdivision of the State – but the exemption applies only where parking meters do *not* meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Even so, they may park in a metered parking space for twice the maximum time permitted on the meter, but no longer than four hours, unless permitted by the parking meter.

State Revenues: TTF revenues decrease from reduced parking fee collections at MDOT facilities, including those at BWI Marshall Airport and the BWI Marshall Amtrak terminal as well as the Cruise Maryland Terminal. MDOT advises that it cannot project the magnitude of lost parking fee revenues under the bill due to a lack of data on the number of qualifying vehicles.

State Expenditures: TTF expenditures increase to address operational gaps at automated facilities. For example, MDOT advises that, because current parking systems at BWI Marshall Airport and the BWI Marshall Amtrak station cannot distinguish specific license plate types, MDOT incurs costs for payment kiosk software upgrades and camera technology modifications and/or staffing at parking gates to manually verify eligible vehicles.

Local Fiscal Effect: Any local governments that operate parking meters may need to modify enforcement procedures or automated systems so that vehicles displaying disabled veteran plates are not improperly cited. Local fee revenues decline, likely minimally, from parking fee exemptions granted under the bill. The magnitude of any such decrease varies by jurisdiction depending on various factors (*e.g.*, parking meter operations within the jurisdiction, current policies, current parking fee revenues, the disabled veteran population within the jurisdiction, etc.). For example, Montgomery County advises that it does not charge fees for any vehicles with disabled plates or tags for on-street metered spaces; the county can implement minor administration and training to comply with the bill using existing resources. Worcester County anticipates a minimal operational impact. Kent County does not enforce any area with parking meters, and the City of Greenbelt advises that it does not own or operate any paid parking meters or parking spaces.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Kent, Montgomery, and Worcester counties; Maryland Association of Counties; cities of Greenbelt and Laurel; Maryland Municipal League; Department of Natural Resources; Maryland Department of Transportation; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Toni Heo

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