



SENATE BILL 313: Special Registration Plates

**This Bill Analysis
reflects the contents
of the bill as it was
presented in
committee.**

2015-2016 General Assembly

Committee:	Transportation, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	July 21, 2015
Introduced by:	Sen. Bingham	Prepared by:	Wendy Graf Ray Committee Counsel
Analysis of:	PCS to First Edition S313-CSSU		

SUMMARY: *The Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) for Senate Bill 313 would make the following changes regarding special registration plates:*

- *Authorize four new special registration plates that have met new plate development requirements, as reported by the Division of Motor Vehicles.*
- *Provide a specific authorization for a Carolina Panthers plate (currently being produced under the broad authorization for Professional Sports Fan plates) with an additional fee and a full-color background.*
- *Reauthorize the Military Veteran special registration plate without a requirement for a minimum number of applications.*
- *Clarify who is eligible for a Retired Register of Deeds special registration plate.*

CURRENT LAW: North Carolina offers a number of special registration plates. Upon application and payment of the required registration fees, a person may obtain from the Division of Motor Vehicles a special registration plate for a motor vehicle registered in that person's name if the person qualifies for the plate. The issuance of most plates is contingent upon the receipt by DMV of at least 300 applications for the particular plate if it is on a standard "First in Flight" background or at least 500 applications if it is on a full-color background.

As a general rule, the fee for a special registration plate is the regular vehicle registration fee, which is \$28 plus a \$10 special registration plate fee. The \$10 special registration plate fee is credited to the Special Registration Plate Account. After deducting the cost of the plates from this account, \$1.3 million is appropriated to provide operating assistance for Visitor Centers. The remaining revenue in the account is transferred quarterly to the Department of Commerce for advertising (33%), the Department of Transportation for highway beautification (50%), and the Department of Human Resources to promote travel accessibility for disabled persons (17%). The cost of some special plates includes a fee in addition to the \$10 special registration plate fee. In those instances, the first \$10 goes to the special registration plate fund and the remainder is transferred quarterly to designated beneficiaries of the additional fee amount.

Prior to 2014, the process for developing a special registration plate was not codified or published. Generally, legislation authorizing a plate was passed, and then the organization would collect applications and design the plate. Over the years, there were many more authorizations for plates than actual plates developed, either due to an inability to meet the minimum number of applications or lack of knowledge about the process. Last year, the General Assembly enacted legislation creating a new development process for special registration plates, which requires the organization desiring the plate to

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submit the required number of paid applications to the Division of Motor Vehicles before legislation is introduced to authorize the plate. The Division is required to submit a report to the General Assembly each year identifying applicants who have met the plate development requirements and are eligible for legislative consideration.

BILL ANALYSIS:

Authorization of new plates. The PCS authorizes four new special registration plates. The following four organizations/plates were identified in the report from the Division of Motor Vehicles as having met the new plate development requirements:

- NC Surveyors – Full-color plate, bearing the phrase "Following In Their Footsteps" with a picture representing a surveyor and the letters "PS" on the right side of the plate. Plate fee would be \$25, with \$15 to be used to grant assistance to persons genuinely interested in formal education in the field of surveying.
- North Carolina Sheriffs' Association – Full-color plate, bearing a phrase and logo selected by the Association. Plate fee would be \$30, with \$20 to be used to support operating expenses of the Association.
- Save the Honey Bee (SB) – Full-color plate, bearing the phrase "Save the Honey Bee" with a picture of a honey bee on a blue flower inside of a hexagon with a honeycomb background and the letters "SB" on the right side of the plate. Plate fee would be \$15, with \$5 to be divided between the Grandfather Mountain Stewardship Foundation, to be used to support the Honey Bee Haven and honey bee educational programs, and the NC State Apiculture Program.
- Save the Honey Bee (HB) – First in Flight plate, bearing the phrase "Save the Honey Bee" with a picture of a honey bee and the letters "HB" on the right side of the plate. Plate fee would be \$15, with \$5 to be used to support the NC State Apiculture Program.

Carolina Panthers plate. A Carolina Panthers special registration plate is currently being produced by the Division of Motor Vehicles under the authorization for Professional Sports Fan plates. A Professional Sports Fan plate must receive a minimum of 300 applications and bears the logo of a professional sports team located in North Carolina. The fee for the plate is the basic \$10 special plate fee.

The PCS would direct the Division to stop issuing Carolina Panthers plates under the Professional Sports Fan authorization and create a new specific authorization for a Carolina Panthers plate that is not subject to the new plate development process or plate expiration provisions. The new plate would be a full-color plate, bearing the phrase "Keep Pounding" with the logo of the Carolina Panthers and the letters "CP". The plate would have a fee of \$30, with \$20 to be divided between the Keep Pounding Fund of the Carolinas Healthcare Foundation, Inc. for cancer research and the Carolina Panthers Charities Fund of the Foundation to create new athletic opportunities for children, support their educational needs, and promote healthy lifestyles for families.

Military Veteran plate. In 2011, the General Assembly passed legislation enacting G.S. 20-79.8, which provides for the expiration of special plate authorizations if they do not receive the required number of applications. The Military Veteran plate has been authorized twice previously (originally by S.L. 2001-498 and reauthorized by S.L. 2013-376). However, the plate did not receive the required 300 minimum applications and has expired.

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The PCS would reauthorize the Military Veteran special registration plate without a required minimum number of applications. The PCS would also specify that the plate would not be subject to the new plate development process or plate expiration provisions.

Retired Register of Deeds plate. The statutes currently authorize a special registration plate bearing the phrase "Register of Deeds, Retired," which is issuable to a retired register of deeds. The PCS would clarify that, for purposes of being eligible for a Retired Register of Deeds special registration plate, a retired register of deeds is a person:

- With at least 10 years of service as a register of deeds in a county in NC; and
- Who no longer holds that office for reasons other than being removed from office for failing to discharge his or her duties.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The act would be effective when it becomes law, except that the Military Veteran plate reauthorization would become effective 90 days after it becomes law.