



SENATE BILL 659: Special License Plates

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

2015-2016 General Assembly

Committee:	Senate Finance	Date:	July 21, 2015
Introduced by:	Sen. Newton	Prepared by:	Cindy Avrette
Analysis of:	PCS to First Edition S659-CSRBf-39		Committee Counsel

SUMMARY: *The Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) for Senate Bill 659 would authorize four new special registration plates that have met new plate development requirements, as reported by the Division of Motor Vehicles.*

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 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.

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BILL ANALYSIS: The PCS authorizes four new special registration plates.¹ 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.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The act would be effective when it becomes law.

Wendy Graf-Ray, counsel to the House Transportation Committee, substantially contributed to this summary.

¹ The House Transportation Committee gave a favorable report on July 21, 2105, to a House Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 313 that would also authorize these four special license plates. The House PCS also makes other special license plate changes. The bill has been referred to House Finance.