

Date of Hearing: July 13, 2015

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Jim Frazier, Chair

SB 257 (Bates) – As Amended June 2, 2015

SENATE VOTE: 40-0

SUBJECT: Vehicles: Gold Star Family license plates.

SUMMARY: Authorizes the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to issue personalized Gold Star Family specialized license plates, as specified.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires DMV, upon registration of a vehicle, to issue two fully reflectorized license plates to the registered owner of the vehicle, as specified.
- 2) Requires every license plate issued by DMV to have displayed upon it the registration number assigned to the vehicle for which it is issued, as specified.
- 3) Allows a state agency to apply to DMV to sponsor a specialized license plate program, as specified.
- 4) Requires specialized license plates to be issued in sequential order in a combination of letters and numbers, as specified.
- 5) Authorizes the state Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) to sponsor a Gold Star family specialized license plate program and authorizes DMV to issue Gold Star specialized license plates to vehicles owned by an eligible family member of a member of the Armed Forces who was killed in the line of duty. Provides that DMV is authorized to issue the plates in absence of the 7,500 paid application requirement if sufficient donations are collected to cover program costs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS: SB 1455 (Cogdill), Chapter 309, Statutes of 2008, authorized CDVA to sponsor the Gold Star Family license plate, and exempted CDVA from having to meet the 7,500 paid applications requirement before plates could be issued. Instead, SB 1455 allowed CDVA to raise private and public donations to cover DMV startup costs so that DMV could start production of the plate. At the time SB 1455 was moving through the legislative process, DMV staff indicated that the costs of establishing the plate would be significantly lower if DMV issued the plate consistent with existing law, that is, in sequential order rather than as personalized license plates. To reduce the amount of funds that CDVA would need to raise, SB 1455 specified DMV to issue the Gold Star license plates in sequential order. CDVA collected the necessary donated funds and DMV began issuing Gold Star Family specialized license plates in November 2010. Since November 2010, DMV has issued 733 Gold Star license plates.

To receive Gold Star Family license plates for a vehicle, the vehicle's registered owner must present proof from either the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of Defense showing that a family member who was in the Armed Forces of the United States was killed

while on active duty. Further, the vehicle owner must show satisfactory proof to the CDVA of one of the following relationships to the person killed while on active duty:

- 1) Widow or widower;
- 2) Biological parent, adoptive parent, stepparent, or foster parent;
- 3) Biological child, adoptive child, or stepchild;
- 4) Sibling or half-sibling;
- 5) Grandparent; or,
- 6) Grandchild

SB 257 authorizes DMV to issue personalized Gold Star Family specialized license plates upon an applicant paying a \$48 personalization fee. The fees shall be deposited into the Motor Vehicle Account and once those fees have covered DMV's cost of implementing the personalization program, all additional fees shall be deposited into the Veterans Service Office Fund. The author states that Gold Star Family members who have lost a loved one who gave their life in defense of our country should not be subject to an arbitrary restriction when trying to honor their fallen family member with a Gold Star Family specialized license plate. The author further notes that the optional fees authorized by this measure gives a choice to loved ones who lost family members in the armed services, but does not require them to pay the fee in order to participate in the program.

Previous legislation: SB 1455 (Cogdill), Chapter 309, Statutes of 2008, allowed CDVA to sponsor a Gold Star Family license plate without meeting the minimum number of applications and fees to cover DMV's program administrative costs if sufficient private and public donations are collected.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Legion-Department of California
AMVETS-Department of California
California Association of County Veterans Service Officers
California Council of Chapters
California State Commanders Veterans Council
Military Officers Association of America
Vietnam Veterans of America-California State Council

Opposition

None on file

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