

MERCHANT MARINE SPECIAL REGISTRATION PLATE

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House Bill 4723 as reported from committee

Sponsor: Rep. Jason Morgan

Committee: Transportation, Mobility and Infrastructure

Complete to 10-14-23

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

SUMMARY:

House Bill 4723 would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to create a Merchant Marine special registration plate.

Under the bill, an individual who is or was a *member of the United States Merchant Marine* or whose spouse is or was a member of the United States Merchant Marine could apply to the secretary of state (SOS) to be issued a Merchant Marine special registration plate. The plate would display an appropriate vignette before the registration numbers and have the words “Merchant Marine” inscribed beneath them.

Member of the United States Merchant Marine would mean an individual who holds a past or present Merchant Mariner license or credential issued by the United States Coast Guard.

An application for a special registration plate under the bill would have to be on a form prescribed by the SOS, accompanied by any proof the SOS requires that the applicant or their spouse is or was a member of the Merchant Marine. This proof would not be required for plate renewals. The applicant would not have to pay a service fee under section 804 for either new or renewal plates.¹

Upon proper application, the SOS would have to issue one or more special registration plates for each applicant for use on a passenger vehicle. An individual who is disabled and applies for a special registration plate would have to be issued a tab for persons with disabilities for their plate.² The SOS would have to require the same proof that the applicant is disabled as is required for issuance for a permanent windshield placard under section 675.³ An individual issued one or more Merchant Marine special registration plates would have to be assessed the applicable registration tax under section 801.⁴

The use of a special registration plate on a vehicle other than the vehicle for which the plate is issued, or by a person who does not qualify for a plate, would be a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$100 or imprisonment for up to 90 days, or both.

The special registration plate would expire on the vehicle owner’s birthday.

Proposed MCL 257.803s

¹ <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-257-804>

² <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-257-803h>

³ <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-257-675>

⁴ <http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-257-801>

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would result in costs to the Department of State of approximately \$60,000 to produce a new vehicle registration plate. Start-up costs include costs associated with design, computer programming, and materials. The bill would not require a service fee when applying for the new plate. The Department of State would likely be able to absorb all administrative and plate production costs within its annual appropriated budget.

The bill also would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on local units of government, in that the number of misdemeanor convictions that would result under provisions of the bill is not known. New misdemeanor convictions would result in increased costs related to county jails and/or local misdemeanor probation supervision. Costs of local incarceration in county jails and local misdemeanor probation supervision, and how those costs are financed, vary by jurisdiction. The fiscal impact on local court systems would depend on how provisions of the bill affected court caseloads and related administrative costs. It is difficult to project the actual fiscal impact to courts due to variables such as law enforcement practices, prosecutorial practices, judicial discretion, case types, and complexity of cases. Any increase in penal fine revenue would increase funding for public and county law libraries, which are the constitutionally designated recipients of those revenues.

POSITIONS:

Representatives of the following associations testified in support of the bill (9-29-23):

- International Ship Masters Association
- Lake Carriers Association

The Department of State indicated support for the bill. (9-19-23)

Legislative Analyst: E. Best
Fiscal Analysts: Michael Cnossen
Robin Risko

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.