

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Fiscal Policy

BILL: SB 88

INTRODUCER: Senator Simpson

SUBJECT: Gold Star License Plates

DATE: December 2, 2015

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Jones</u>	<u>Eichin</u>	<u>TR</u>	Favorable
2.	<u>Sanders</u>	<u>Ryon</u>	<u>MS</u>	Favorable
3.	<u>Jones</u>	<u>Hrdlicka</u>	<u>FP</u>	Pre-meeting

I. Summary:

SB 88 allows additional family members related to a servicemember killed while serving in the United States Armed Forces to qualify for issuance of the Gold Star license plate upon payment of the appropriate license tax and fees.

The fiscal impact of the bill is indeterminate (See Section V.).

II. Present Situation:

Gold Star Recognition

Gold Star Families

The term Gold Star family is a modern reference that comes from the Service Flag. The Service Flag was a banner first flown by families during World War I, which included a blue star for every immediate family member serving in the armed forces of the United States. If that loved one died, the blue star was replaced by a gold star. This allowed members of the community to recognize the sacrifice made by the Gold Star Family members.¹

Gold Star Lapel Button

The gold star lapel button is designed and approved by the Secretary of Defense to identify the loved ones of fallen servicemembers of the armed forces of the United States. Family members eligible for the lapel button include the surviving spouse, mother, father, stepmother, stepfather, mother or father through adoption, foster parents, children, stepchildren, children through adoption, brothers or sisters, and half brothers or sisters.²

¹ Army.Mil Features, *Gold Star Survivors*, available at <http://www.army.mil/goldstar> (last visited Dec. 1, 2015).

² 10 U.S.C. s. 1126

Gold Star License Plate

The Gold Star license plate is a special license plate developed to honor the family members of a servicemember killed while serving in the United States Armed Forces. The plate is currently available to a spouse, legal mother or father, or stepparent currently married to the mother or father of a fallen servicemember who was living in Florida at the servicemember's time of death. The plate is issued, upon payment of the license tax and appropriate fees, without regard to the deceased servicemember's state of residence.³

The surviving spouse and a surviving parent of a servicemember are eligible to receive one Gold Star license plate per household at no charge. An application for a Gold Star license plate requires proof of relationship to the servicemember and documentation from the United States Department of Defense or from its subordinate agencies, such as the Coast Guard, Reserve, or National Guard, deeming a servicemember to have been killed while in service.⁴

As of August 2015, there were 564 active Gold Star registrations statewide.⁵

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill extends eligibility for a Gold Star license plate to a parent through adoption, foster parent, grandparent, child, stepchild, adopted child, brother, sister, half-brother, or half-sister of a fallen servicemember upon payment of the appropriate license tax and fees.

The bill is effective July 1, 2016.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

³ Section 320.0894, F.S.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), *SB 88 Agency Bill Analysis*, (Aug. 24, 2015) (on file with the Senate Committee on Transportation).

B. Private Sector Impact:

An eligible family member who chooses to receive a Gold Star license plate will pay the same tax and fees as if he or she were issued a standard license plate.⁶

An individual will pay a \$28 new license plate fee if a Gold Star license plate is replacing any plate prior to the 10-year forced replacement of the license plate.⁷

C. Government Sector Impact:

Currently it costs \$1.57 to manufacture a standard license plate and \$2.82 to manufacture a Gold Star license plate, a difference of \$1.25. The department receives an annual appropriation to purchase license plates. In Fiscal Year 2015-2016, \$9,695,197 was appropriated for that purpose.⁸ To the extent that more individuals qualify for and obtain Gold Star license plates, the department will have to pay the \$1.25 difference to manufacture each Gold Star plate. While the fiscal impact is indeterminate, it is anticipated to be minimal and can be covered within the department's existing resources.⁹

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

Tax Collector offices issuing Gold Star license plates may find it difficult to verify some of the added family members' relationship to the deceased service member.¹⁰

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill amends section 320.0894 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

⁶ License taxes vary based on type and weight of vehicle. *See* s. 320.08, F.S.

⁷ Email from the DHSMV (Oct. 27, 2015) (on file with the Senate Committee on Transportation).

⁸ Specific Appropriation 2645, Chapter 2015-232, L.O.F.

⁹ *Supra* note 5 and email correspondence from DHSMV (Nov. 30, 2016) (on file with the Senate Committee on Fiscal Policy).

¹⁰ *Id.*