

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 Transportation Committee

BILL: SB 528

INTRODUCER: Senators Bennett and Gaetz

SUBJECT: Combat Infantry Badge License Plates

DATE: November 14, 2011 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Abrams	Buford	TR	Pre-meeting
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

This bill creates the “Combat Infantry Badge” Special Use license plate. Such plates may be issued to recipients of the Combat Infantry Badge upon application, accompanied by proof of membership in the Combat Infantryman’s Association, Inc., or other proof of being a recipient of the Combat Infantry Badge, and payment of the vehicle license tax.

This bill substantially amends s. 320.089, F.S.

II. Present Situation:

Motor vehicle license plates; issuance; annual license taxes

The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) administers the issuance of motor vehicle license plates as a part of the tag and registration requirements specified in chapter 320, F.S. License plates are issued for a 10-year period and are replaced upon renewal at the end of the 10-year period.¹ The license plate fee for both an original issuance and replacement is \$28.00.² An advance replacement fee of \$2.80 is applied to the annual vehicle registration and is credited towards the next replacement. Section 320.08, F.S., requires the payment of an annual license tax that varies by motor vehicle type and weight; for a standard passenger vehicle weighing between 2,500 and 3,500 pounds, the annual tax is \$30.50.

¹ Section 320.06, F.S.

² An initial issuance requires a fee of \$225, pursuant to s. 320.072, F.S.

Current law provides for several types of license plates. In addition to plates issued for governmental or business purposes, DHSMV offers four basic types of plates to the general public:

- **Standard Plates:** The standard license plate currently comes in three configurations, which include the county name designation, the state motto designation, and the state slogan designation.
- **Specialty License Plates:** Specialty license plates are used to generate revenue for colleges, universities and other civic organizations. Organizations seeking to participate in the specialty plate program are required to make application with DHSMV, pay an application fee, and obtain authority from the Florida Legislature.³ The recipient must pay applicable taxes pursuant to sections 320.08, F.S., and 320.06(1)(b), F.S., and an additional charitable contribution ranging from \$15 to \$25 as provided in section 320.08056(a) – (zzz), F.S., in order to receive a specialty license plate. The creation of new specialty license plates by DHSMV is prohibited until July 1, 2014.⁴
- **Personalized Prestige License Plates:** Personalized license plates are available to motorists who wish to personalize a license plate. Personalized license plates allow motorists to define the alpha numeric design (up to 7 characters) on a standard plate that must be approved by the DHSMV. The cost for a personalized prestige license plate (in addition to the applicable tax in section 320.08, F.S.) is \$15 (\$10 use fee and \$5 processing fee), pursuant to section 320.0805, F.S.
- **Special Use License Plates:** Certain members of the general public may be eligible to apply for special use license plates if they are able to document their eligibility pursuant to various sections of chapter 320, F.S. This category of plates primarily includes special military license plates as well as plates for the handicapped. Examples include the Purple Heart, National Guard, U.S. Armed Forces, Ex-POW, Pearl Harbor, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom plates,⁵ Disabled Veteran plates,⁶ and Paralyzed Veterans of America plates.⁷

Annually, the first \$100,000 of revenues from the sales of Special Use plates authorized under s. 320.089, F.S., are deposited into the Grants and Donations Trust Fund under the Veterans' Nursing Homes of Florida Act. Any additional revenues are deposited into the State Homes for Veterans Trust Fund and used to construct, operate, and maintain domiciliary and nursing homes for veterans.

Combat Infantryman Badge

³ See generally s. 320.08053, F.S.

⁴ The moratorium on new specialty license plates is created by s. 45, Chapter 2008-176, Laws of Florida, as amended by s. 21, Chapter 2010-223, Laws of Florida.

⁵ Section 320.089, F.S. Some of these plates require payment of the annual license tax in s. 320.08, F.S., while others are exempt from the tax.

⁶ Section 320.084, F.S. The statute provides that an eligible person may receive one free Disabled Veteran license plate, although other taxes apply.

⁷ Section 320.0845, F.S. This plate requires payment of the annual license tax in s. 320.08, F.S.

The Combat Infantryman Badge is the U.S. Army combat service recognition decoration awarded to soldiers—enlisted men and officers (commissioned and warrant) holding colonel rank or below, who personally fought in active ground combat while an assigned member of either an infantry or a Special Forces unit, of brigade size or smaller, any time after December 6, 1941.⁸ The Combat Infantryman Badge and its non-combat analogue, the infantry skill-recognition Expert Infantryman Badge were simultaneously established by Section I, War Department Circular 269, dated October 27, 1943.⁹ The Combat Infantryman Badge was created during World War II with the primary goal of recognizing the combat service and sacrifices of the infantrymen who would likely be wounded or killed in numbers disproportionate to those of soldiers from the Army's other service branches.¹⁰

Combat Infantryman Badge recipients must have met the following criteria to have been awarded this honor as provided by the Military Awards Army Regulation 600-8-22:

- Be an infantryman satisfactorily performing infantry duties.
- Assigned to an infantry during such time as the unit is engaged in active ground combat.
- Actively participate in such ground combat. Campaign or battle credit alone is not sufficient for the award of the Combat Infantry Badge.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill amends s. 320.089, F.S., to create a Special Use plate for the recipients of the Combat Infantry Badge. This bill requires the manufacture and issuance of a special license plate stamped with the words "Combat Infantry Badge" to any recipient of the Combat Infantry Badge, who applies for the special license plate, pays the applicable license taxes provided in s. 320.08, F.S., and provides proof of membership in the Combat Infantrymen's Association, Inc., or other acceptable proof of being a Combat Infantry Badge recipient.

The bill provides an effective date of October 1, 2012.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

⁸ <http://www.army.mil/symbols/CombatBadges/infantry.html>

⁹ <http://cibassoc.com/history/history-of-the-combat-infantrymans-badge/>

¹⁰ *Id.*

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Persons who purchase a “Combat Infantry Badge” Special Use license plate created by the bill will be required to pay applicable taxes as provided in s. 320.08, F.S.

C. Government Sector Impact:

According to DHSMV, costs to produce the “Combat Infantry Badge” Special Use plate are minimal and can be absorbed within existing resources. It is unknown how many Florida residents are Combat Infantry Badge recipients and will apply for this license plate. Tax Collectors will have to maintain an adequate inventory of these license plates and issue them to qualified Combat Infantry Badge recipients.

Also, the DHSMV’s Information Systems Administration (ISA) will require approximately 120 hours to implement the provisions of this bill. These hours can be incorporated into ISA’s normal workload.¹¹

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial 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.

¹¹ Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, *Senate Bill 528 Analysis* (October 25, 2011) (on file with the Senate Transportation Committee).