

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 Transportation

BILL: CS/SB 518

INTRODUCER: Senators Soto and Hutson

SUBJECT: Bronze Star License Plates

DATE: December 3, 2015

REVISED: _____

| | ANALYST | STAFF DIRECTOR | REFERENCE | ACTION |
|----|---------|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| 1. | Jones | Eichin | TR | Fav/CS |
| 2. | | | MS | |
| 3. | | | FP | |

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 518 creates a special military license plate for recipients of the Bronze Star Medal. Revenue generated from the sale of this license plate will be deposited into the Grants and Donations Trust Fund and the State Homes for Veterans Trust Fund.

The bill also redirects revenue from the sale of the "Woman Veteran" special plates to the Grants and Donations Trust Fund and adds language indicating the funds must be expended solely for the purpose of creating and implementing programs that benefit women veterans.

II. Present Situation:

Special License Plates

Current law provides for several types of license plates. In addition to plates issued for governmental or business purposes, the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) offers four basic types of plates to the general public:

- Standard plates;
- Specialty license plates;
- Personalized prestige license plates; and
- 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 ch. 320, F.S. Special use license plates primarily include special military license plates as well as plates for the disabled.

Currently, there are 21 special license plates authorized in s. 320.089, F.S., available to military service members or veterans for the following types of service:

- Veteran of the United States Armed Forces;
- Active or retired member of the Florida National Guard;
- Survivor of the attack on Pearl Harbor;
- Recipient of the Purple Heart Medal;
- Active or retired member of any branch of the United States Armed Forces Reserve;
- Recipient of the Combat Infantry Badge;
- Recipient of the Combat Medical Badge;
- Recipient of the Combat Action Badge;
- Recipient of the Combat Action Ribbon;
- Recipient of the Air Force Combat Medal;
- Recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross;
- Former Prisoner of War;
- Veteran of the Korean War;
- Veteran of the Vietnam War;
- Service member or veteran of Operation Desert Shield;
- Service member or veteran of Operation Desert Storm;
- Service member or veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom;
- Service member or veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom;
- Veteran of World War II;
- Navy Submariner; and
- Woman Veteran.

Special license plates authorized under s. 320.089, F.S., are stamped with words consistent with the type of special plate issued. For example, a special plate issued to a current or former member of the Florida National Guard is stamped with the words “National Guard.” Additionally, a likeness of the related campaign medal or badge appears on the plate.¹

Applicants for special use license plates in s. 320.089, F.S., are required to pay the annual license tax in s. 320.08, F.S., with the exception of certain disabled veterans who qualify for the Pearl Harbor, Purple Heart, or Prisoner of War plate, to whom such plates are issued at no cost.² With the exception of “Woman Veteran” plates, the first \$100,000 of the general revenue generated annually from the issuance of special use military plates is deposited into the Grants and Donations Trust Fund under the Veterans’ Nursing Homes of Florida Act, as described in s.

¹ For plate samples, see Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, *Military License Plates*, <http://www.flhsmv.gov/specialtytags/miltags.html> (last visited Nov. 20, 2015).

² Section 320.089(1)(c) and (2)(a), F.S.

296.38(2), F.S. Additional general revenue is deposited into the State Homes for Veterans Trust Fund and used to construct, operate, and maintain domiciliary and nursing homes for veterans.³

For Fiscal Year 2014-2015, the total revenue from military special plates was \$2,711,574.⁴

Woman Veteran Plates

The bill creating the “Woman Veteran” special military license plate passed in the 2015 legislative session.⁵ Revenue generated from the sale of the plate must be deposited into the Operations and Maintenance Trust Fund administered by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) pursuant to s. 20.375(3), F.S.⁶ Revenue generated from the sale of the plate must be used solely for the creation and implementation of programs that benefit women veterans. The DVA has since determined the Grants and Donations Trust Fund is the best fund to receive distribution of these revenues.⁷

Bronze Star Medal

The Bronze Star Medal is a military decoration awarded to a person in any branch of the military who, while serving in any capacity with the Armed Forces of the United States after December 6, 1941, distinguished himself or herself by heroic or meritorious service, not involving participation in aerial flight, in connection with military operations against an armed enemy.⁸

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates a special military license plate for recipients of the Bronze Star Medal. The plate will be stamped with the words “Bronze Star” and a likeness of the Bronze Star Medal. To receive a Bronze Star special license plate the individual must submit an application for the plate to the DHSMV, provide proof that he or she is a Bronze Star Medal recipient, and pay the appropriate license tax as provided in s. 320.08, F.S.

General revenue generated from the sale of the Bronze Star plate funds the Grants and Donations Trust Fund and the State Home for Veterans Trust Fund.

The bill also redirects revenue from the sale of the “Woman Veteran” special plates from the Operations and Maintenance Trust Fund administered by the DVA to the Grants and Donations Trust Fund administered by the DVA. A cross-reference is replaced to conform to this change. Additionally, the bill adds language to both the Veterans’ Nursing Home of Florida Act⁹ and the Veterans’ Domiciliary Home of Florida Act¹⁰ to specify funds generated from the sale of this

³ Section 320.089(1)(b), F.S.

⁴ Email from Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs, (Nov. 23, 2015) (on file with the Senate Committee on Transportation).

⁵ See ch. 2015-91, Laws of Fla.

⁶ Section 320.089(1)(c), F.S.

⁷ Email from Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs, (Dec. 2, 2015) (on file with the Senate Committee on Transportation).

⁸ U.S. Air Force Fact Sheet, *Bronze Star*, http://www.afpc.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet_print.asp?fsID=7771&page=1 (last visited Nov. 20, 2015).

⁹ Ch. 296, part II, F.S.

¹⁰ Ch. 296, part I, F.S.

plate must be expended solely for the creation and implementation of programs that benefit women veterans.

The bill takes effect 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.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Individuals who choose to receive the Bronze Star or Woman Veteran license plate will pay the same tax and fees as if he or she were issued a standard license plate.¹¹

There is a \$28 new license plate fee if the special military plate is replacing any plate prior to the 10-year forced replacement of the current license plate.¹²

C. Government Sector Impact:

The DHSMV estimates an initial startup cost of \$2,882 for the creation and manufacture of 1,000 Bronze Star license plates to be distributed to Tax Collector offices statewide to meet public demand.¹³ It is indeterminate how many individuals will be eligible and choose to receive a special license plate.

The bill could have a positive impact on the Grants and Donations Trust Fund and the State Homes for Veterans Trust Fund.

¹¹ License taxes vary based on type and weight of vehicle. *See* s. 320.08, F.S.

¹² Section 320.0607(3), F.S.

¹³ Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, *SB 518 Agency Bill Analysis*, (Oct. 20, 2015) (on file with the Senate Committee on Transportation).

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 296.11, 296.38, and 320.089.

IX. Additional Information:

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS by Transportation on December 12, 2015:

The CS requires that funds received from the sale of “Woman Veteran” special license plates are to be deposited in the Grants and Donations Trust Fund administered by the DVA, instead of the Operations and Maintenance Trust Fund. Additional language is added to ensure funds received from the sale of the “Woman Veteran” plate must be expended solely for the creation and implementation of programs that benefit women veterans.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.