

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 Infrastructure and Security

BILL: SB 322

INTRODUCER: Senator Stewart

SUBJECT: Specialty License Plates/Gopher Tortoise

DATE: January 31, 2020

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Knight</u>	<u>Miller</u>	<u>IS</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>ATD</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

I. Summary:

SB 322 creates the Gopher Tortoise specialty license plate and provides for the design of the plate and the use of the annual fees associated with the specialty license plate.

SB 324 (2020), which this bill is linked to, provides for an annual use fee of \$25 for the Gopher Tortoise specialty license plate.

According to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV), the bill will have a negative, but insignificant fiscal impact associated with programming costs. These costs can be absorbed within existing resources.

The bill has an effective date of October 1, 2020, but only if SB 324 or similar legislation takes effect, if such legislation is adopted in the same legislative session or an extension thereof and becomes law.

II. Present Situation:

Specialty License Plates

Presently, there are over 100 specialty license plates available for purchase in Florida¹. Specialty license plates are available to an owner or lessee of a motor vehicle who is willing to pay an annual use fee, ranging from \$15 to \$25, paid in addition to required license taxes and service fees.² The annual use fees are distributed to an organization or organizations in support of a particular cause or charity signified on the plate's design and designated in statute.³

¹ A list of Florida's specialty license plates is available on the DHSMV website at <http://www.flhsmv.gov/dmv/specialtytags/> (last visited January 24, 2020).

² Section 320.08056, F.S.

³ Section 320.08058, F.S.

In order to establish a specialty license plate and after the plate is approved by law, s. 320.08053, F.S., requires the following actions within certain timelines:

- Within 60 days, the organization must submit an art design for the plate, in a medium prescribed by the DHSMV;
- Within 120 days, the DHSMV must establish a method to issue pre-sale vouchers for the specialty license plate; and
- Within 24 months after the pre-sale vouchers are established, the organization must obtain a minimum of 1,000 voucher sales before manufacturing of the plate may begin.

If the minimum sales requirement has not been met by the end of the 24-month pre-sale period, then the DHSMV will discontinue the plate and issuance of pre-sale vouchers. Upon discontinuation, a purchaser of a presale voucher may use the annual use fee as a credit towards any other specialty license plate or apply for a refund with the DHSMV.⁴

The annual use fees collected by an organization and any interest earned from the fees may be expended only for use in this state unless the annual use fee is derived from the sale of specified United States Armed Forces and veterans-related specialty plates.⁵ Additionally, organizations must adhere to certain accountability requirements, including an annual audit or attestation document affirming that funds received have been spent in accordance with applicable statutes.⁶

DHSMV Costs Defrayed

The DHSMV is authorized to retain a sufficient portion of annual use fees collected from the sale of specialty plates to defray its costs for inventory, distribution, and other direct costs associated with the specialty license plate program. The remainder of the proceeds collected are distributed as provided by law.⁷

Discontinuance of Specialty Plates

The DHSMV must discontinue the issuance of an approved specialty license plate if the number of valid registrations falls below 1,000 plates for at least 12 consecutive months. A warning letter is mailed to the sponsoring organization following the first month in which the total number of valid specialty license plate registrations is below 1,000 plates. Collegiate plates for Florida universities are exempt from the minimum specialty license plate requirement.⁸ In addition, the DHSMV is authorized to discontinue any specialty license plate if the organization no longer exists, stops providing services that are authorized to be funded from the annual use fee proceeds, or pursuant to an organizational recipient's request.⁹

⁴ Section 320.08053(2)(b), F.S.

⁵ Section 320.08056(10)(a), F.S.

⁶ Section 320.08062, F.S.

⁷ Section 320.08056(7), F.S.

⁸ Section 320.08056(8)(a), F.S.

⁹ Section 320.08056(8)(b), F.S.

Wildlands Conservation

The Wildlands Conservation is a non-profit organization, created in 2003¹⁰, specializing in conservation planning and policy, land management, land protection, research, education and outreach. The Wildlands Conservation works on conservation projects throughout Florida. They strive to work with landowners and others around the state to maximize conservation and minimize impacts, which can be costly to that landowner¹¹. Wildlands offers gopher tortoise relocation in attempt to save tortoises from sites permitting for development. They are committed to ensuring that gopher tortoise survey and relocation work is done thoroughly and professionally as possible to protect gopher tortoises across the state¹².

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill directs the DHSMV to develop the Gopher Tortoise specialty license plate bearing the colors and design approved by the DHSMV. The new license plates will display the word “Florida” at the top of the plate and “Protect the Gopher Tortoise” at the bottom of the plate.

The bill directs the annual fees to be distributed as follows:

- Up to 15 percent may be used for administrative and marketing cost of the license plate; and
- The remainder of funds will be distributed by the Wildlands Conservation Inc. to eligible Florida-based scientific, conservation, and educational organizations for gopher tortoises and upland habitat research, conservation, and management.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

¹⁰ Florida Department of State, Division of Corporations, Sunbiz, Wildlands Conservation, Inc., <http://search.sunbiz.org/Inquiry/CorporationSearch/ByName> (last visited January 24, 2020).

¹¹ <http://www.wildlandsconservation.org/> (last visited January 24, 2020).

¹² Gopher Tortoise Permitting and Relocating Services available at <http://www.wildlandsconservation.org/gopher-tortoise-services>. (last visited January 24, 2020).

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Revenue from the sale of the Gopher Tortoise license plate will benefit the Wildlands Conservation Inc. and eligible Florida- based scientific, conservation, and educational organizations for gopher tortoises and upland habitat research, conservation, and management

C. Government Sector Impact:

Depending on the number of distributions tied to the plate, the amount of programming may vary as will the resources needed to complete the changes. The average specialty/special license plate requires approximately 200-250 hours of programming.¹³The DHSMV is authorized to retain revenues from the first proceeds of specialty license plate sales to defray departmental expenditures related to the specialty license plate program.¹⁴

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 320.08058

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

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

None.

¹³ Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, *Senate Bill 322*. (January 27, 2020)

¹⁴ Section 320.08056(7), F.S.

B. Amendments:

None.

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