



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Transportation

Director's Office

355 Capitol St. NE, MS 11

Salem, OR 97301

DATE: February 23, 2017

TO: House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

FROM: Amy Joyce, Legislative Liaison

SUBJECT: HB 2149, permanent registration for former prisoners of war

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 2149 would allow new applicants for the license plate honoring former prisoners of war to pay a one-time low-cost registration fee. Current holders of this plate would never again pay a renewal fee.

DISCUSSION

Oregonians who are former prisoners of war may choose a license plate that distinguishes their particular service and sacrifice. The plate is available to those who served in the active military, naval, or air service of the United States, or one of its allies. Under the terms of the statute, a prisoner of war is a person who was forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty, by an enemy government or hostile force during a period of war, or by a foreign government or hostile force under circumstances comparable to those who have been forcibly detained or interned by enemy governments during times of war. The existing law also allows a surviving spouse of a person who has this plate to keep it as valid registration or as a memento.

The law creating this plate was passed in 1985. Since that time, 127 Oregonians have selected that plate; 33 vehicles currently have this registration.

The bill could be implemented by making the reduced fee and the permanent nature of the plate automatic. The qualifying customer could go into a DMV field office to get the plate, or order it right at the new car dealership. New plates would be pressed showing "permanent" on the bottom of the plate, and no tags would be necessary. The computer would process the transaction from the beginning, knowing the registration was permanent and that no renewal reminder would issue. Nor would the system expect a payment – and automatically cancel for failure to pay the fee. This is the typical way DMV implements changes to fees, plates, and registration time periods. Automation creates a seamless transaction for the customer, as well as being efficient for DMV. However, this method would be quite expensive to accomplish.

Considering the very small number of Oregonians who have the current registration or may obtain it in the future, DMV would like to explore ideas to accomplish the goal of low-cost, one-time registration for these heroic Oregonians. And to do so in a way that does not cost a lot of money that could take away from other veteran services. Such ideas will require manual processes, and a somewhat less-than-seamless process for the customer. We anticipate it may be no more onerous for the customer than what they do today, receiving renewal stickers every two years and attaching them to the current plate.

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SUMMARY

A small number of Oregonians have the license plate honoring former prisoners of war. The bill would allow those who already have this plate to never pay another registration renewal fee, and those who obtain it in the future to pay a one-time low-cost registration fee. To automate this change would be expensive. Considering the small number of transactions, DMV would like to explore other ways to accomplish the goal of the bill.