



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Department of Transportation

Director's Office

355 Capitol St. NE, MS 11

Salem, OR 97301

DATE: May 6, 2025

TO: House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government,
and Veterans

FROM: Amy Joyce, DMV Administrator

SUBJECT: SB 159 – Veteran Recognition license plates for Motorcycles and Mopeds

BACKGROUND

The Driver and Motor Vehicles Services Division (DMV) of the Oregon Department of Transportation issues registration license plates to identify vehicles and to raise revenue for the maintenance and operation of Oregon's road system.

There are several programs that recognize and promote institutions and causes, and to raise revenue for them. One such program is ODOT's Specialty Plate program. Formerly, each specialty plate was created in statute and had certain annual sales minimums for continued issuance. Examples include the Cultural Trust and Pacific Wonderland plates. Several years ago, the Legislature directed DMV to run the Specialty plate program administratively. The program now requires an applicant for a new plate to demonstrate sufficient interest in the plate by pre-selling 3,000 vouchers before DMV will take steps to put the new plate into production. Annual sales minimums continue to be required for ongoing issuance of any specialty plate.

The Veteran Recognition plate program has its own set of statutes, and therefore, its own requirements. Veteran Recognition plates have existed for about three decades, including under a former statutory program called Group Plates. After multiple legislative efforts at streamlining, today all Veteran Recognition plates are grouped under a single "umbrella" for operation and sales minimums.

Currently there are 25 different options for qualifying veterans. They include six branches of service (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine). They also include 14 service medals. In addition, there are plates for more specific military groupings. There is a plate for Purple Heart honorees and for Medal of Honor recipients. Gold Star family members are also eligible for plates under this broad Veteran Recognition umbrella. The plates are on a white background with "veteran" printed at the bottom of the plate.

Because all of these are under the Veteran Recognition program umbrella, all of them—and any additions—are subject to current law, which requires the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs (ODVA) to pay the DMV costs (ORS 805.106).

Most veteran plates require a surcharge of \$10, at first issuance and every registration renewal, for two plates. After DMV costs are recovered, the remainder of the surcharge proceeds go to support



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Oregon's Veteran Homes.

Under current law Veteran Recognition plates, and all Specialty plates, are only available for passenger vehicles. In the past, both Specialty plates and Veteran Recognition plates were available for motorhomes and travel trailers. Those plates were eliminated by the Legislature in 2003 via a bill that significantly streamlined license plate administration. The reason for this, specifically, was that sales of Specialty and Veteran Recognition plates for those types of vehicles were minimal and did not justify costs that would be incurred for ongoing issuance.

None of the Veteran Recognition plates, nor any of the license plates under the Specialty Plate program, have ever been available on motorcycles or mopeds. There are two veteran plates—not Veteran Recognition program plates—that are available on motorcycles and mopeds. They are disabled veteran plates and ex-POW plates, both of which come with one-time, low-cost registration. Both have a yellow background with blue alpha-numeric characters and have no military insignia.

BILL CONTENT

This bill requires DMV to begin issuing Veteran Recognition license plates for both motorcycles and mopeds.

DMV would implement the bill by working with advocates, law enforcement, and the plate manufacturer on the plate design to achieve readability and solve any production issues. Given the size of motorcycle and moped plates, it may prove challenging to incorporate the military insignias in a way that achieves the intended goal of recognition.

DMV would also work with advocates to determine if all, or just some, of the 25 current Veteran Recognition options, would be available for motorcycles and mopeds. To make this plate option available for veterans, DMV would also make changes to computer programming, forms, web sites, etc. DMV anticipates, based on the sales numbers for the previously issued Veteran Recognition plates for motorhomes and travel trailers, that there will be relatively low demand for these plates. DMV would issue these plates from Headquarters—not directly in individual field offices—which is how all Veteran Recognition plates are issued today.

It is difficult for DMV to estimate the number of motorcycle and moped plates that would be sold. Relevant data to help estimate sales volumes are as follows. Oregon has approximately 267,000 military veterans. Of those, about half are age 65 or older. Oregon has approximately 128,000 registered motorcycles and mopeds, which is about 3.5% of all registered personal-use vehicles. The average annual number of Veteran Recognition plates issued over the last five years (2019 - 2024) is 2,710.

Because of the challenge in estimating sales volumes, DMV would begin by ordering a relatively small number of each plate, to hold down costs and avoid waste.

Finally, DMV would turn to ODVA for the upfront costs of establishing these plates. For context,



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ODOT transfers approximately \$100,000 per year to ODVA for the Oregon Veteran Homes, which the Veteran Recognition plate program helps support.

CONCLUSION

DMV issues 25 different Veteran Recognition plates for passenger vehicles only. SB 159 would require DMV to begin issuing such plates for both motorcycles and mopeds. DMV cannot estimate the number of plates that would be sold, but based on existing data we anticipate it will be relatively low volume. To keep costs down, DMV would work with advocates on which of the 25 insignias should be produced and start with a small order of plates. ODVA is responsible for DMV's costs for this work. Revenue from Veteran Recognition plate sales, after covering the ongoing cost of issuance, goes to Veteran Homes.