

Introduced by Committee on Transportation and Housing (Senators DeSaulnier (Chair), Beall, Cannella, Gaines, Galgiani, Hueso, Lara, Liu, Pavley, Roth, and Wyland)

February 19, 2014

Senate Resolution No. 28—Relative to vehicle license plates.

1 WHEREAS, In 1937, the Legislature enacted statutes requiring
2 all motor vehicles operating upon the highways to display license
3 plates; and

4 WHEREAS, The Legislature created the license plate system
5 to make the ownership and registration status of the vehicle readily
6 identifiable, and, over the intervening decades, the Department of
7 Motor Vehicles worked to improve both the visibility and legibility
8 of the license plates it issued; and

9 WHEREAS, The number of different license plates the
10 Department of Motor Vehicles issues has increased significantly
11 over the decades to include different types of plates for different
12 types of vehicles, to the extent there are currently 47 different
13 license plate types in use in California; and

14 WHEREAS, Since the 1980s, various special interest groups
15 have persuaded the Legislature to create special interest license
16 plates to identify their particular affiliations or fund their individual
17 causes, which has further compounded the proliferation of license
18 plate types in use in California; and

19 WHEREAS, Vehicle license plates were not originally intended
20 to promote or advertise a particular cause or ideology, or to fund
21 the operations or projects of special interest groups or state
22 agencies; and

23 WHEREAS, Because of concerns that the configuration and
24 graphic components of various license plates have reduced the

1 legibility, recognizability, and usefulness to the public and law
2 enforcement agencies of license plates as a means of vehicle
3 identification and determination of registration status, and have
4 resulted in the denigration of public safety, the Senate Committee
5 on Transportation authored, and the Senate passed, Senate
6 Resolution 43 of 1994 to establish a moratorium on legislation to
7 increase the number of license plate types authorized for issuance
8 until the Legislature could assess the full and long-term impact of
9 the increase in license plate types, and until the Department of
10 Motor Vehicles, the Department of the California Highway Patrol,
11 the Department of Justice, and local law enforcement could form
12 a task force to study and make recommendations to the Legislature
13 and the Governor about the proliferation of license plate types
14 authorized for use in California; and

15 WHEREAS, The task force reported its findings and
16 recommendations in July 1995 and therein recommended that
17 California maintain the white reflectorized license plate with red
18 script “California” and blue alpha/numeric characters, reduce the
19 number of license plate types, and issue no additional special
20 interest license plates. These recommendations, however, noted
21 that if the Legislature determines that a compelling need exists to
22 authorize another special interest license plate, it should rigorously
23 adhere to design standards that include no full plate graphics,
24 confining the message to the left of and below the alpha/numeric
25 series, and specify visibility standards; and

26 WHEREAS, In the intervening 18 years, the Women’s Resource
27 Center sued the state, which resulted in the court enjoining the
28 state from creating additional special interest license plates for
29 nonprofit organizations; and

30 WHEREAS, The Legislature passed AB 84 (Leslie), Chapter
31 454 of the Statutes of 2006, to create an administrative process for
32 state agencies to create special interest license plates to promote
33 the mission of the agency; and

34 WHEREAS, Three state agencies have created special interest
35 license plates pursuant to the AB 84 process and the Legislature
36 has authorized through statute several additional special interest
37 license plates; now, therefore, be it

38 *Resolved by the Senate of the State of California*, That there
39 again be established a moratorium on legislation to increase the
40 number of license plate types that the Department of Motor

1 Vehicles is authorized to issue until the Legislature can assess the
2 full and long-term impact from the ongoing increase in license
3 plate types; and be it further

4 *Resolved*, That the Director of Motor Vehicles is requested to
5 establish a task force, whose members shall include representatives
6 from the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of the
7 California Highway Patrol, and local law enforcement agencies,
8 to study and make recommendations to the Legislature and the
9 Governor on the proliferation of license plate types authorized for
10 use in the state; and be it further

11 *Resolved*, That the special task force shall assess the cumulative
12 and potential future impact on vehicle identification and safety
13 from the increase in license plate configurations and recommend
14 to the Legislature and the Governor a comprehensive plan to ensure
15 the effectiveness of license plate types authorized for use in
16 California; and be it further

17 *Resolved*, That the results and recommendations of this task
18 force be submitted to the Legislature and the Governor no later
19 than July 1, 2015; and be it further

20 *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of
21 this resolution to the Director of Motor Vehicles and the
22 Commissioner of the California Highway Patrol, and to the author
23 for appropriate distribution.