

Senate Resolution No. 28

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

Relative to vehicle license plates

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Because of concerns that the configuration and graphic components of various license plates have reduced the legibility, recognizability, and usefulness to the public and law enforcement agencies of license plates as a means of vehicle identification and determination of registration status, and have resulted in the denigration of public safety, the Senate Committee on Transportation authored, and the Senate passed, Senate Resolution 43 of 1994 to establish a moratorium on legislation to increase the number of license plate types

authorized for issuance until the Legislature could assess the full and long-term impact of the increase in license plate types, and until the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of the California Highway Patrol, the Department of Justice, and local law enforcement could form a task force to study and make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor about the proliferation of license plate types authorized for use in California; and

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

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

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

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

Resolved by the Senate of the State of California, That there again be established a moratorium on legislation to increase the number of license plate types that the Department of Motor Vehicles is authorized to issue until the Legislature can assess the full and long-term impact from the ongoing increase in license plate types; and be it further

Resolved, That the Director of Motor Vehicles is requested to establish a task force, whose members shall include representatives from the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Department of the California Highway Patrol, and local law enforcement agencies, to study and make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor on the

proliferation of license plate types authorized for use in the state; and be it further

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

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

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

Senate Resolution No. 28 read and adopted by the Senate April 10, 2014.

Attest: _____
Secretary of the Senate