

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2024 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 5576

By Delegate Young

[Introduced February 12, 2024; Referred to the
Committee on Technology and Infrastructure]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §17A-3-23 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
2 to authorizing municipal fire departments specialized license plates.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

**ARTICLE 3. ORIGINAL AND RENEWAL OF REGISTRATION; ISSUANCE OF
CERTIFICATES OF TITLE.**

**§17A-3-23. Registration plates to state, county, municipal and other governmental vehicles;
use for undercover activities.**

1 (a) Any motor vehicle designed to carry passengers, owned or leased by the State of West
2 Virginia, or any of its departments, bureaus, commissions, or institutions, except vehicles used by
3 the Governor, Treasurer, not to exceed eight vehicles operated by investigators of the Office of the
4 Attorney General, three vehicles per elected office of the Board of Public Works not otherwise
5 specified, vehicles operated by the State Police, not to exceed five vehicles operated by the office
6 of the Secretary of Military Affairs and Public Safety, not to exceed five vehicles operated by the
7 Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, vehicles operated by natural
8 resources police officers of the Division of Natural Resources, not to exceed 10 vehicles operated
9 by the arson investigators of the Office of State Fire Marshal, not to exceed two vehicles operated
10 by the Division of Protective Services, not to exceed 16 vehicles operated by inspectors of the
11 Office of the Alcohol Beverage Control Commissioner, vehicles operated by the West Virginia
12 Wing of the Civil Air Patrol, and vehicles operated by probation officers employed under the
13 Supreme Court of Appeals may not be operated or driven by any person unless it has displayed
14 and attached to the front thereof, in the same manner as regular motor vehicle registration plates
15 are attached, a plate of the same size as the regular registration plate, with white lettering on a
16 green background bearing the words "West Virginia" in one line and the words "State Car" in
17 another line, and the lettering for the words "State Car" shall be of sufficient size to be plainly
18 readable from a distance of 100 feet during daylight: *Provided*, That beginning January 1, 2019,

19 state vehicle license plates shall be gold with blue lettering.

20 The vehicle shall also have attached to the rear a plate bearing a number and any other
21 words and figures as the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles shall prescribe. The rear plate shall also
22 be green with the number in white: *Provided*, That beginning January 1, 2019, state vehicle
23 license plates shall be gold with blue lettering.

24 (b) Registration plates issued to vehicles owned by counties shall be white on red with the
25 word "County" on top of the plate and the words "West Virginia" on the bottom.

26 (c) Registration plates issued to a city or municipality shall be white on blue with the word
27 "City" on top and the words "West Virginia" on the bottom.

28 (d) (1) Registration plates issued to a city or municipality law-enforcement department
29 shall include blue lettering on a white background with the words "West Virginia" on top of the plate
30 and shall be further designed by the commissioner to include a law-enforcement shield together
31 with other insignia or lettering sufficient to identify the motor vehicle as a municipal law-
32 enforcement department motor vehicle. The colors may not be reversed and shall be of
33 reflectorized material. The registration plates issued to counties, municipalities, and other
34 governmental agencies authorized to receive colored plates hereunder shall be affixed to both the
35 front and rear of the vehicles.

36 (2) Registration plates issued to a city or municipality fire department shall include blue
37 lettering on a white background with the words "West Virginia" on top of the plate and shall be
38 further designed by the commissioner to include a fire department insignia together with other
39 lettering sufficient to identify the motor vehicle as a municipal fire department vehicle. The colors
40 may not be reversed and shall be of reflectorized material.

41 (e) (1) Registration plates issued to vehicles operated by county sheriffs shall be designed
42 by the commissioner in cooperation with the sheriffs' association with the word "Sheriff" on top of
43 the plate and the words "West Virginia" on the bottom. The plate shall contain a gold shield
44 representing the sheriff's star and a number assigned to that plate by the commissioner. Every

45 county sheriff shall provide the commissioner with a list of vehicles operated by the sheriff, unless
46 otherwise provided in this section, and a fee of \$10 for each vehicle submitted by July 1, 2002.

47 (2) Registration plates issued to vehicles operated by the West Virginia Wing of the Civil Air
48 Patrol shall be designed by the commissioner in cooperation with the Civil Air Patrol and include
49 the words "Civil Air Patrol" on the plate. The Civil Air Patrol shall provide the commissioner with a
50 list of vehicles operated by the Civil Air Patrol, unless otherwise provided in this section, and a fee
51 of \$10 for each new vehicle for which a Civil Air Patrol license plate is requested.

52 (f) The commissioner is authorized to designate the colors and design of any other
53 registration plates that are issued without charge to any other agency or nonstate government
54 entity entitled to registration plates at no charge in accordance with the motor vehicle
55 laws: *Provided*, That where the institutions of higher education opt to have their logo displayed on
56 the state license plate, such institution shall bear any additional costs of those added features:
57 *Provided, however*, That no public service districts or designated nongovernmental organizations
58 shall be issued a license plate designated for vehicles owned or leased by the State of West
59 Virginia, or any of its departments, bureaus, commissions, or institutions.

60 (g) Upon application, the commissioner is authorized to issue a maximum of five Class A
61 license plates per applicant to be used by county sheriffs and municipalities on law-enforcement
62 vehicles while engaged in undercover investigations.

63 (h) The commissioner is authorized to issue a maximum of five Class A license plates to be
64 used on vehicles assigned to the Division of Motor Vehicles investigators for commercial driver
65 examination fraud investigation and driver's license issuance fraud detection and fraud
66 prevention.

67 (i) The commissioner is authorized to issue an unlimited number of license plates per
68 applicant to authorized drug and violent crime task forces in the State of West Virginia when the
69 chairperson of the control group of a drug and violent crime task force signs a written affidavit
70 stating that the vehicle or vehicles for which the plates are being requested will be used only for

71 official undercover work conducted by a drug and violent crime task force.

72 (j) The commissioner is authorized to issue 20 Class A license plates to the Criminal
73 Investigation Division of the Department of Revenue for use by its investigators.

74 (k) The commissioner may issue a maximum of 10 Class A license plates to the Division of
75 Natural Resources for use by natural resources police officers. The commissioner shall designate
76 the color and design of the registration plates to be displayed on the front and the rear of all other
77 state-owned vehicles owned by the Division of Natural Resources and operated by natural
78 resources police officers.

79 (l) The commissioner is authorized to issue an unlimited number of Class A license plates
80 to the Commission on Special Investigations for state-owned vehicles used for official undercover
81 work conducted by the Commission on Special Investigations.

82 (m) The commissioner is authorized to issue a maximum of two Class A plates to the
83 Division of Protective Services for state-owned vehicles used by the Division of Protective
84 Services in fulfilling its mission.

85 (n) The commissioner is authorized to issue Class A registration plates for vehicles used
86 by the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit created by §9-7-7 of this code.

87 (o) The commissioner is authorized to issue Class A registration plates for vehicles used
88 by the West Virginia Insurance Fraud Unit created by §33-41-8 of this code.

89 (p) No other registration plate may be issued for, or attached to, any state-owned vehicle.

90 (q) The Commissioner of Motor Vehicles shall have a sufficient number of both front and
91 rear plates produced to attach to all state-owned or leased vehicles.

92 (r) The commissioner shall, after consultation with the Fleet Management Division
93 established pursuant to §5A-12-1 *et seq.* of this code and the Enterprise Resource Planning Board
94 established pursuant to §12-6D-1 *et seq.* of this code, develop and adopt a standardized naming
95 convention for the title, registration, and licensing of state vehicles, pursuant to §17A-3-25 of this
96 code. The naming convention adopted shall be consistent with the naming convention adopted for

97 the centralized accounting system as maintained by the Enterprise Resource Planning Board for
98 the purpose of creating and maintaining an accurate and up to date inventory of the state vehicle
99 fleet.

100 (s) It is the duty of each office, department, bureau, commission, or institution furnished
101 any vehicle to have plates as described herein affixed thereto prior to the operation of the vehicle
102 by any official or employee.

103 (t) The commissioner may issue special registration plates for motor vehicles titled in the
104 name of the Division of Public Transit or in the name of a public transit authority as defined in this
105 subsection and operated by a public transit authority or a public transit provider to transport
106 persons in the public interest. For purposes of this subsection, "public transit authority" means an
107 urban mass transportation authority created pursuant to §8-27-1 *et seq.* of this code or a nonprofit
108 entity exempt from federal and state income taxes under the Internal Revenue Code and whose
109 purpose is to provide mass transportation to the public at large. The special registration plate shall
110 be designed by the commissioner and shall display the words "public transit" or words or letters of
111 similar effect to indicate the public purpose of the use of the vehicle. The special registration plate
112 shall be issued without charge.

113 (u) Each green registration plate with white letters affixed to a state vehicle, and each
114 corresponding title and registration certificate for all state vehicles, other than those vehicles with
115 Class A registration plates as provided in this section, terminates at midnight on December 31,
116 2018. Each spending unit assigned a state vehicle that is required to display a state vehicle license
117 plate and registration shall obtain a new title, new registration card, and new state vehicle license
118 plate prior to January 1, 2019: *Provided*, That no state vehicle license plate shall be issued unless
119 the spending unit has provided an affirmative statement that the vehicle is a state asset recorded
120 in the central accounting system as maintained by the Enterprise Resource Planning Board, and
121 the same has been verified by the commissioner, as required by §17A-3-25 of this code. When
122 new registrations are issued pursuant to this article and for subsequent, nonClass A registrations

123 of state owned or leased vehicles, the state vehicle registration plate and certificate shall be valid
124 for a period of not more than 24 months and shall be required to be renewed every two years.

125 (v) The commissioner is authorized to prepare and promulgate emergency rules, pursuant
126 to §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code in order to implement amendments to this section.

127 (w) Any person who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and,
128 upon conviction thereof, shall be fined not less than \$50 nor more than \$100. Magistrates have
129 concurrent jurisdiction with circuit courts for the enforcement of this section.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to authorize the Division of Motor Vehicles to issue special motor vehicle plates for municipal fire department vehicles.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.