

**2023 -- S 0436 SUBSTITUTE A**

LC001809/SUB A

**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2023**

A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES -- REGISTRATION OF VEHICLES

Introduced By: Senators Felag, DiPalma, Lawson, Raptakis, Lauria, Murray, and Valverde

Date Introduced: February 16, 2023

Referred To: Senate Special Legislation and Veterans Affairs

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Sections 31-3-46, 31-3-48, 31-3-48.1, 31-3-48.2 and 31-3-62 of the General  
2 Laws in Chapter 31-3 entitled "Registration of Vehicles" are hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **31-3-46. P.O.W. plates.**

4 The administrator of the division of motor vehicles shall issue plates designated as "Ex-  
5 P.O.W." upon application on proper forms furnished by the administrator of the division of motor  
6 vehicles to former prisoners of war (P.O.W.) of World Wars I and II, the Korean conflict, and  
7 Vietnam conflict. The plates may be issued for any motor vehicle eligible for registration as an  
8 automobile, or a commercial vehicle having a gross weight of ~~ten thousand pounds (10,000 lbs)~~  
9 twelve thousand pounds (12,000 lbs.) or less. The applicant shall not be required to pay a  
10 registration fee or service charge for the plate. Upon the death of the holder of any P.O.W. plates,  
11 the plates shall be transferred to his or her surviving spouse for the spouse's lifetime until he or she  
12 remarries.

13 **31-3-48. Plates for recipients of Purple Heart.**

14 (a) The administrator of the division of motor vehicles is empowered to make available to  
15 recipients of the Purple Heart Medal up to two (2) sets of special motor vehicle registration plates  
16 for any motor vehicle eligible for registration as an automobile or commercial vehicle having a  
17 gross weight of twelve thousand pounds (12,000 lbs.) or less, indicating the owner as a recipient of  
18 the Purple Heart.

19 (b) The plate shall contain the words "combat wounded" across the top of the plate and

1 shall have an insignia for the Purple Heart and be followed by the letters “P H”, followed by a  
2 numeral or numerals. The Purple Heart insignia may be reproduced on the plate in the color purple.

3 (c) Upon the death of the holder of any Purple Heart plates, the plates shall be transferred  
4 to his or her surviving spouse for the spouse’s lifetime until he or she remarries.

5 (d) The applicant is not required to pay a registration fee or service charge for the plates.

6 (e) Upon the death of the holder of any Purple Heart plates, if there is no surviving spouse,  
7 a family member of the recipient may retain one of the special motor vehicle registration plates in  
8 his or her own keeping, provided he or she does not display the plate upon any motor vehicle or  
9 any other form of transportation owned or operated by the family member. The other Purple Heart  
10 plate must be returned to the division of motor vehicles.

11 (f) Any violation of the provisions of subsection (e) of this section shall be deemed a civil  
12 violation, and any person displaying a special motor vehicle registration plate upon any vehicle  
13 shall, upon conviction, be fined five hundred dollars (\$500) for each offense. Each day in which  
14 the special motor vehicle registration plate is displayed upon any vehicle shall be a separate offense  
15 punishable by the same penalty.

16 **31-3-48.1. Plates for recipients of Distinguished Service Cross.**

17 (a) The administrator of motor vehicles is empowered to make available to recipients of  
18 the United States Army Distinguished Service Cross medal a special motor vehicle registration  
19 plate [for any motor vehicle eligible for registration as an automobile or commercial vehicle having](#)  
20 [a gross weight of twelve thousand pounds \(12,000 lbs.\) or less](#), indicating the owner as a recipient  
21 of the distinguished service cross. The applicant shall be required to pay a registration fee and a  
22 transfer charge of five dollars (\$5.00) for the plate.

23 (b) The plate shall contain the words “Distinguished Service Cross” across the top of the  
24 plate, shall bear an insignia for the distinguished service cross, and then a numeral or numerals.

25 (c) Upon the death of the holder of any “Distinguished Service Cross” plate, the plate shall  
26 be transferred to the surviving spouse for the spouse’s lifetime or until remarriage.

27 **31-3-48.2. Plates for recipients of the Bronze Star Medal.**

28 (a) The administrator of the division of motor vehicles is empowered to make available to  
29 recipients of the United States Bronze Star Medal a special motor vehicle registration plate [for any](#)  
30 [motor vehicle eligible for registration as an automobile or commercial vehicle having a gross](#)  
31 [weight of twelve thousand pounds \(12,000 lbs.\) or less](#), indicating the owner as a recipient of the  
32 Bronze Star Medal. The applicant shall be required to pay a registration fee and a transfer charge  
33 of five dollars (\$5.00) for the plate.

34 (b) The plate shall contain the words “Bronze Star Medal” across the top of the plate, shall

1 bear an insignia for the Bronze Star Medal, and then a numeral or numerals.

2 (c) Upon the death of the holder of any "Bronze Star Medal" plate, the plate shall be  
3 transferred to the surviving spouse for the spouse's lifetime or until remarriage.

4 **31-3-62. National guard plates.**

5 (a) The administrator of the division of motor vehicles is empowered and authorized to  
6 make available to all active and retired members of the Rhode Island army and air national guard a  
7 special motor vehicle registration plate for any motor vehicle eligible for registration as an  
8 automobile or a commercial vehicle having a gross weight of ~~eight thousand five hundred pounds~~  
9 ~~(8,500 lbs.)~~ twelve thousand pounds (12,000 lbs.) or less.

10 (b) The special motor vehicle registration plate shall carry on it the designation "National  
11 Guard" and shall also carry on it an emblem on the left-hand side of the plate to be designed and  
12 provided by the office of the adjutant general, with the numerals to the right of it.

13 (c) The administrator of the division of motor vehicles shall issue the plate upon the  
14 payment of a service charge of twenty dollars (\$20.00) and a transfer charge of five dollars (\$5.00)  
15 for the plate. All revenues shall be deposited as general revenues.

16 (d) For the purposes of this section an active or retired member of the Rhode Island army  
17 and air national guard shall be defined as any person certified by the adjutant general as currently  
18 serving or having retired under honorable conditions in either the Rhode Island army or air national  
19 guard.

20 (e) In a state of emergency, any active member of the army or air national guard driving a  
21 vehicle bearing the special motor vehicle registration plate shall be authorized and empowered to  
22 travel upon the highways of the state notwithstanding any driving ban imposed by any state or  
23 municipal authority.

24 SECTION 2. Section 31-6-8 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-6 entitled "Registration  
25 Fees" is hereby amended to read as follows:

26 **31-6-8. Disabled veterans.**

27 (a) Any veteran who has been honorably discharged from the service of the armed forces  
28 or the merchant marine of the United States in any of the wars or campaigns in which the United  
29 States has been engaged and who, while engaged in these wars or campaigns or as a result of  
30 engagement in these wars or campaigns, by reason of amputation, has lost one or both of his or her  
31 arms, hands, feet, or legs, or who, by reason of other permanent injury, has lost the use of one or  
32 both of his or her arms, hands, feet, or legs, or to whom has been granted a motor vehicle under  
33 chapter 870-2D, United States Public Laws 663, enacted 1946, 79th Congress, or has suitable  
34 documentation from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to establish that the veteran:

1 (1) Has a combined service connected disability rating of one hundred percent (100%); or

2 (2) Is considered “individually unemployable” due to his or her service-connected  
3 disability, shall be exempt from the payment of any fee for the annual registration of and a license  
4 to operate that motor vehicle.

5 (b) The administrator for the division of motor vehicles shall issue to an eligible veteran  
6 for use on an automobile, or on a commercial vehicle having a gross weight of ~~six thousand three~~  
7 ~~hundred pounds (6,300 lbs.)~~ twelve thousand pounds (12,000 lbs.) or less, registration plates  
8 designated “Disabled Veteran.” Upon the death of the holder of “Disabled Veteran” plates, the  
9 plates may be transferred to his or her surviving spouse for his or her lifetime or until he or she  
10 remarries. Only one set of “Disabled Veteran” plates shall be issued to an eligible veteran and only  
11 after certification of eligibility from the Veterans’ Administration or other satisfactory  
12 documentation of eligibility is presented.

13 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
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1           This act would increase the weight limit of those vehicles which are registerable with  
2 prisoner of war plates, Purple Heart plates, Distinguished Service Cross plates, Bronze Star Medal  
3 plates, National Guard plates or disabled veterans' plates to twelve thousand pounds (12,000 lbs.)  
4 and would apply to any vehicle registerable as an automobile or commercial vehicle.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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