

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
1997 SESSION

SESSION LAW 1997-461
SENATE BILL 426

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE SPECIAL REGISTRATION LICENSE PLATES ON CERTAIN COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES, TO PROVIDE SPECIAL REGISTRATION LICENSE PLATES FOR MAGISTRATES, TO ADVANCE THE DATE FOR ISSUANCE OF SPECIAL REGISTRATION LICENSE PLATES FOR SHERIFFS, AND TO PLACE A MORATORIUM ON THE CREATION OF ANY MORE SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES UNTIL THE LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION HAS COMPLETED ITS STUDY OF SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

Section 1. G.S. 20-63(b), as amended by S.L. 1997-36, reads as rewritten:

"(b) Every license plate shall have displayed upon it the registration number assigned to the vehicle for which it is issued, the name of the State of North Carolina, which may be abbreviated, and the year number for which it is issued or the date of expiration, ~~expiration and, if the A plate is issued for a commercial vehicle, as defined in G.S. 20-4.2(1), must bear the word 'commercial,' designating 'commercial vehicle.'~~ The Division may not issue a plate bearing the word 'commercial' for a trailer, or a vehicle unless the plate is a special registration plate authorized in G.S. 20-79.4 or the commercial vehicle is a trailer or is licensed for 6,000 pounds or less.

A registration plate issued by the Division for a private passenger vehicle or for a private hauler vehicle licensed for 6,000 pounds or less shall be a 'First in Flight' plate. A 'First in Flight' plate shall have the words 'First in Flight' printed at the top of the plate above all other letters and numerals. The background of the plate shall depict the Wright Brothers biplane flying over Kitty Hawk Beach, with the plane flying slightly upward and to the right."

Section 2. G.S. 20-79.4(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) General. — Upon application and payment of the required registration fees, a person may obtain from the Division a special registration plate for a motor vehicle registered in that person's name if the person qualifies for the registration plate. A special registration plate, ~~with the exception of a personalized registration plate, plate may not be issued for a vehicle registered under the International Registration Plan. Plan or for a commercial truck.~~ A special registration plate may be issued for a commercial vehicle that is not registered under the International Registration Plan. A holder of a

special registration plate who becomes ineligible for the plate, for whatever reason, must return the special plate within 30 days."

Section 3. G.S. 20-79.4(b) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(14a) Magistrate. -- Issuable to a North Carolina magistrate. The plate shall bear the letters 'MJ' followed by a number indicating the district court district the magistrate serves, then by a hyphen, and then by a number indicating the seniority of the magistrate. The Division shall use the number '9' to designate District Court Districts 9 and 9B."

Section 4. Section 2 of S.L. 1997-158 reads as rewritten:

"Section 2. This act becomes effective December 1, 1997. is effective when it becomes law."

Section 5. The General Assembly finds that the number of special license plates has substantially increased since 1990. The proliferation of new special license plates raises issues about the types of plates the State may issue and the amount and distribution of funds derived from the plates. For this reason, House Bill 9 authorizes the Legislative Research Commission to study the number and types of special registration plates issued by the Division of Motor Vehicles and the amount and distribution of funds derived from the issuance of those plates. The Commission will report the results of this study, including any legislative recommendations, to the 1998 Session of the 1997 General Assembly. It is the intent and purpose of this section to assure that the General Assembly will not enact legislation authorizing the issuance of any more special license plates until the completion of this study.

Section 6. Sections 1 and 2 of this act become effective January 1, 1998, and apply to registration plates issued for periods beginning on or after that date. Section 5 of this act becomes effective September 1, 1997. The remaining sections of this act are effective when this act becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 21st day of August, 1997.

s/ Marc Basnight
President Pro Tempore of the Senate

s/ Harold J. Brubaker
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ James B. Hunt, Jr.
Governor

Approved 4:00 p.m. this 1st day of September, 1997