

**§468. Specialty license plate**

The Secretary of State may not issue a specialty license plate until the sponsor has met all of the requirements of this section and the proposed specialty license plate legislation as required in subsection 7 is reviewed by the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation matters and approved by the Legislature. For the purposes of this subchapter, "specialty license plate" means a specially designed registration plate that may be used in place of the regular plate and registration for fundraising purposes. The Secretary of State shall administer a specialty license plate in accordance with the following provisions. [PL 2017, c. 327, §13 (AMD).]

**1. Sponsor.** A person must register with the Secretary of State and receive approval from the Secretary of State as the sponsor of a specialty license plate. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

**1-A. Sponsor affiliation.** A sponsor must be affiliated with a state department that is responsible for oversight of the collection and distribution of the contributions collected under subsection 2, paragraph B and not returned pursuant to subsection 2, paragraph C, which, except as provided by subsection 2, must be deposited in an other special revenue account to provide essential services to the public. To obtain preliminary approval in subsection 1-B, the sponsor shall provide documentation to the Secretary of State identifying the state department providing oversight and that department shall submit in writing on departmental letterhead to the Secretary of State that it agrees to oversee the collection and distribution of the contributions. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

**1-B. Plate design approval.** This subsection governs the plate design approval process.

A. A sponsor shall submit the documentation under subsection 1-A to the Secretary of State and obtain from the Secretary of State preliminary approval of the proposed specialty license plate design before proceeding with subsection 2. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

B. Before preliminarily approving the proposed specialty license plate design, the Secretary of State shall obtain the services of a professional designer, paid by the sponsor, to format the plate to meet the Secretary of State's design requirements and standards. The Secretary of State shall consult with the Maine State Police and the Maine Turnpike Authority to evaluate the human and electronic readability of the plate design. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

C. Before manufacturing the specialty license plate, the Secretary of State shall provide the final design for a specialty license plate to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation matters for review. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

**2. Names, signatures and payment.** The Secretary of State may not manufacture an authorized specialty license plate unless the sponsor:

A. Provides to the Secretary of State a list with 4,000 names, dated signatures and current plate numbers of supporters who have physically signed a statement on paper declaring they intend to purchase and display the specialty license plate; [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

B. Collects from each supporter who signs the statement an amount of \$25 for each set of plates and provides to the Secretary of State the sum of these contributions in the amount of \$100,000, which is nonrefundable; and [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

C. Informs each supporter that the \$25 contribution will be returned to the supporter within 90 days if the requirements in subsection 7 are not met within one year. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

The Secretary of State shall deposit the \$100,000 provided under paragraph B in the Specialty License Plate Fund established under section 469.

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

**3. Fee.**

[PL 2007, c. 383, §5 (RP).]

**3-A. Credit voucher.** The Secretary of State shall provide a voucher to each of the 4,000 supporters that contributed \$25. The credit voucher may be used only to obtain one set of specialty license plates.

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

**3-B. Registration fee.** The fee for the specialty license plate is in addition to the regular motor vehicle registration fee required by section 501 and the excise tax required by Title 36, section 1482.

[PL 2007, c. 383, §5 (NEW).]

**3-C. Fee; credit to funds.** This subsection governs the funding distribution for specialty license plates approved for issuance after June 30, 2024. In addition to the regular motor vehicle registration fee prescribed by law for the particular class of vehicle registered, the initial fee for the specialty license plates is \$20, which must be deposited with the Treasurer of State and credited as follows:

A. Ten dollars to the other special revenue account under subsection 1-A for purposes specified in the account description; [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

B. Nine dollars to the Highway Fund for administrative and production costs; and [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

C. One dollar to the Specialty License Plate Fund established under section 469. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

**3-D. Renewal fee.** This subsection governs the funding distribution for renewals of specialty license plates after June 30, 2024. In addition to the regular motor vehicle registration fee prescribed by law for the particular class of vehicle registered, the annual renewal fee for the specialty license plates is \$15, which must be deposited with the Treasurer of State and credited as follows:

A. Ten dollars to the other special revenue account under subsection 1-A for purposes specified in the account description; [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

B. Four dollars to the Highway Fund for administrative and production costs; and [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

C. One dollar to the Specialty License Plate Fund established under section 469. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

**4. Minimum number manufactured.** The Secretary of State shall manufacture a minimum of 4,000 specialty license plates for each specialty license plate authorized under this section.

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

**5. Design approval.**

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (RP).]

**6. Numbering, lettering and duplicate plates.** The Secretary of State shall issue a specialty license plate in a 3-number and 3-letter combination sequence. Plate numbers may not duplicate plates issued in another class of plate. Vanity plates may not duplicate vanity plates issued in another class of plate. This subsection does not apply to a person that holds a specialty license plate with duplicate numbers in another class of plate or a duplicate vanity plate in another class of plate issued in accordance with section 453 prior to July 1, 2023, as long as the person maintains a valid registration with that plate.

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

**7. Deadline for Secretary of State approval.** The sponsor must submit to the Secretary of State the names, signatures, payment and proposed design for the specialty license plate by September 1st. The signatures must have been collected in-person within one year of submission to the Secretary of State. Electronically collected signatures may not be accepted. If the requirements of subsections 1, 1-A, 1-B and 2 are met, the Secretary of State shall submit proposed legislation seeking authorization of the specialty license plate to the following regular session of the Legislature. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

**8. Weight limit.** Except as provided under section 456-F, subsection 7, paragraph B, a specialty license plate under this subchapter may be issued for an automobile or truck that does not exceed 26,000 pounds registered weight. After June 30, 2024, an automobile or truck that is issued a specialty license plate may not exceed 10,000 pounds registered weight. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

**9. Limit on authorization.** The Secretary of State shall manage the number of approved specialty license plates in accordance with this subsection.

A. [PL 2017, c. 327, §15 (RP).]

B. [PL 2017, c. 327, §15 (RP).]

C. When a specialty license plate falls to 4,500 registrations, the Secretary of State shall notify the sponsor and the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation matters of the Secretary of State's intent to retire and cease to issue the specialty license plate if the number of registrations falls below 4,000 for one year. The Secretary of State shall provide the sponsor with monthly updates. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

D. The Secretary of State shall retire, cease to issue and replace upon renewal a specialty license plate if the number of registrations falls below 4,000 for more than one year. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

E. The Secretary of State shall retire, cease to issue and replace upon renewal a specialty license plate if the entity receiving a distribution of the contributions ceases to operate or does not comply with this section. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

F. When the total number of approved specialty license plates reaches 15, the Secretary of State may not approve a specialty license plate sponsor under subsection 1. The sponsor's name and affiliated state department identified pursuant to subsection 1-A must be added to a waiting list in the order of the received requests. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

**10. Additional versions or classes of the specialty license plate.** The Secretary of State may not issue a specialty license plate in a class other than passenger plates.

A. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (RP).]

B. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (RP).]

C. [PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (RP).]

Commercial plates issued prior to July 1, 2023 under sections 455 and 456-F are exempt from this subsection.

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).]

**11. Affiliated state department.** A sponsor shall provide to the affiliated state department identified pursuant to subsection 1-A an annual independent audit of the other special revenue account. The affiliated state department shall provide to the Secretary of State an annual audit report and an accounting of the contributions received and distributed during that reporting period. The Secretary of

State shall provide the report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation matters.

[PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (NEW).]

#### SECTION HISTORY

PL 1997, c. 776, §12 (NEW). PL 2001, c. 623, §5 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 652, §B1 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 652, §B8 (AFF). PL 2007, c. 240, Pt. LLLL, §3 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 383, §5 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 695, Pt. A, §33 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 356, §5 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 66, §1 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 327, §§13-15 (AMD). PL 2021, c. 216, §12 (AMD). PL 2023, c. 271, §6 (AMD).

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