

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE STATE AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 8, 2011

8:04 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Bob Lynn, Chair  
Representative Wes Keller, Vice Chair  
Representative Paul Seaton  
Representative Peggy Wilson  
Representative Max Gruenberg  
Representative Pete Petersen  
Representative Kyle Johansen

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

All members present

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

HOUSE BILL NO. 19

"An Act relating to special request registration plates; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED OUT OF COMMITTEE

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

BILL: HB 19

SHORT TITLE: SPECIAL REQUEST LICENSE PLATES

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) LYNN, KELLER, GATTO

01/18/11	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/7/11
01/18/11	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/18/11	(H)	STA, FIN
02/08/11	(H)	STA AT 8:00 AM CAPITOL 106

**WITNESS REGISTER**

WHITNEY BREWSTER, Director  
Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV)  
Department of Administration  
Anchorage, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Answered questions during the hearing on HB 19.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[8:04:24 AM](#)

**CHAIR BOB LYNN** called the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Keller, Seaton, Wilson, Johansen, Petersen, and Lynn were present at the call to order. Representative Gruenberg arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**HB 19-SPECIAL REQUEST LICENSE PLATES**

[8:04:57 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN announced that the only order of business was HOUSE BILL NO. 19, "An Act relating to special request registration plates; and providing for an effective date."

CHAIR LYNN introduced HB 19 as joint prime sponsor. He said on a recent trip to Indiana, he noted there were a great number of license plates on which were the words "In God We Trust." He reported that the Indiana Borough of Motor Vehicles issued 250,000 of those license plates in the first six months that they were available. He said HB 19 would create a special request license plate on which would be the American Flag and the words, "In God We Trust." He noted that the Indiana plate is pictured in the committee packet. He said the typical procedure would be followed to have similar plates in Alaska; the driver would request the "national motto plate" and pay a [\$30] fee.

[8:07:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PETERSEN noted that some special license plates in Alaska cost \$30 and some cost \$50, and he asked how the prices are set.

[8:08:21 AM](#)

WHITNEY BREWSTER, Director, Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Department of Administration, said the fees associated with a license plate are set by the legislature. She said the fees vary; sometimes the specialty plate is designed as a fund raiser, so the fee may be higher, for example. In response to Representative Keller, she said in a majority of cases, the DMV works with the impacted organization on the development of the plate design. The DMV essentially checks with law enforcement

to ensure the design meets its needs. She said the most recent plates made were for firefighters and emergency medical service (EMS) workers and the Iditarod plate. She said the DMV has the ability to do less sophisticated design, but does not have design staff.

[8:11:08 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN noted that in the committee packet are the designs from license plates not only from Indiana, but also from Virginia and South Carolina.

MS. BREWSTER, in response to Representative Keller, confirmed that the division would work with the joint prime sponsors on the design of the proposed plate.

[8:12:16 AM](#)

CHAIR LYNN closed public testimony.

[8:12:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE P. WILSON directed attention to a sentence [on page 1, lines 9-10, of HB 19], which read as follows:

The department may disapprove the issuance of registration plates under this subsection when the requested plates are a duplication of an existing registration.

MS. BREWSTER, in response to Representative Wilson, said it is not a problem if someone wants to change from one plate design to another. She explained that the aforementioned language means that if the symbols on the plate have already been issued, then the division will not duplicate that registration.

[8:13:46 AM](#)

MS. BREWSTER, in response to a question from Representative Johansen, said these plates would be available to commercial vehicles and motorcycles. In response to Chair Lynn, she confirmed that the design can be shrunk to fit on the smaller license plates used on motorcycles.

[8:14:27 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG related that New Hampshire once had a plate which stated, "Live Free or Die." He said someone opposed that expression and covered it up, and the U.S. Supreme Court upheld that action.

MS. BREWSTER said she has never dealt with that issue. In response to a follow-up question, she confirmed that the DMV is a member of the American Administration of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA), which has membership from all 50 states and the territories. She said she has not heard the AAMVA discuss any occurrences where a license plate owner covered up the motto on the plate.

[8:17:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHANSEN opined that Representative Gruenberg has brought up an interesting point. He said someone might interpret "The Last Frontier" on their plate as meaning Alaska is a place where trees should not be cut down or mining should not occur. He suggested the committee may want to consider amending the bill so that a person could have a "blank plate."

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG clarified that he was interested in the legal issue and finding out how the division addressed it if it had arisen. However, he said since the division has not addressed the issue, he is not planning to pursue it.

[8:18:56 AM](#)

MS. BREWSTER, in response to Representative Wilson, estimated that currently there are 50 different plates available to Alaskans, including specialty plates designed for the military and the university.

[8:20:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRUENBERG asked if there is a mechanism in the division for striking statutes concerning license plates when the eligible recipients have all died, such as a plate for Pearl Harbor survivors.

MS. BREWSTER offered her understanding that there is not. In response to a follow-up, she offered her understanding that currently there are no plates that are obsolete, but she said perhaps soon there will be, for example, the Pearl Harbor plates mentioned by Representative Gruenberg.

CHAIR LYNN remarked that it amazes him that it takes legislation to get rid of legislation.

[8:22:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHANSEN predicted that "In God We Trust" should last.

[8:23:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KELLER moved to report HB 19 out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no further objection, HB 19 was reported out of the House State Affairs Standing Committee.

[8:24:11 AM](#)

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House State Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:24 a.m.