

JOHN SPIROS

State Representative • 86th Assembly District

Assembly Bill 443

December 19, 2017

Testimony from Rep. Spiros

Hello, and thank you Chairman Ripp and members of the Assembly Committee on Transportation for allowing me to have the opportunity to share my testimony with you today regarding Assembly Bill 443, which deals with special registration plate fees for first responders.

This bill exempts special group plates for firefighters, rescue squad members, and emergency medical technicians and first responders (EMTs) from special registration plate fees, removing the current \$15 fee.

In many communities, these plates serve as a way for law enforcement and other first responders to identify these individuals and allow them to decipher at first glance which vehicles belong on the scene.

As a former law enforcement officer, public safety is a first priority for me. The purpose of this bill is simply to ensure public safety for both first responders and other citizens. It also helps to remove an, albeit small, additional cost burden that is placed on our first responders. These are not vanity plates, they are plates that are utilized by those responding first to help others.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share testimony in support of this bill.



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17th SENATE DISTRICT

December 19, 2017
Assembly Committee on Transportation
Testimony on Senate Bill 360 and Assembly Bill 443

Good Morning!

Thank you Chairman Ripp and committee members for taking the time to hear testimony on Senate Bill 360 and Assembly Bill 443. These companion bills would eliminate the additional \$15 issuance fee charged by the Department of Transportation on emergency medical technician, firefighter and rescue squad license plates.

The idea for this legislation was brought to me by a local constituent who serves as a volunteer fireman and emergency medical technician in his community.

Unlike other specialty license plates, that raise funds and awareness for non-profit organizations and causes, the license plates included under this proposal serve a role in public safety. They notify that help is on the way.

In rural areas of our state, volunteer firefighters, emergency medical technicians and first responders are often the first, and sometimes only, trained personnel to arrive to emergency scenes. Volunteers are often called into action in their personal vehicles. These license plates help identify first responders to those involved in accidents, police officers or other emergency personnel responding from other neighboring fire stations.

The Department of Transportation also recognizes the significance of emergency personnel license plates as they require each of these plates to be exchanged for regular license plates when an individual retires. Therefore, under the current system for these license plates, our emergency responders are being charged \$15 a year to "rent" their license plate. These specific license plates are also only available to licensed emergency medical technicians, firefighters, and rescue crew members.

Other specialty license plates do not carry a return requirement. People are free to keep their license plates when they are done using them. For instance you can hang your Packers or Brewers license plate in your garage or in your basement if you choose not to renew the plate the next year.

If enacted, this bill would cost the state an estimated \$10,500 a year. This is a small contribution to make for public safety and a big thank you to all the emergency personnel that respond to emergencies around our state on a daily basis.

So far this idea has received strong bi-partisan support in both houses of the Legislature. Senate Bill 360 **passed the Senate this fall on a 33-0, unanimous vote.** I would encourage you to vote in favor of this bill as well. Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions about the bill.



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Testimony from Brent Brown, Boscobel Volunteer Emergency Medical Technician

“70% of firefighters and EMTs are volunteers and there are many times that we show up on an emergency scene where we’re parking against traffic and parking in odd ways. That plate identifies me going through traffic and at the scene. We are America’s first responders. We’re the ones who are responding to your calls for help.

We are volunteers who work full time jobs and then come home from work and volunteer to save lives. Our specialty license plates are not vanity plates, they identify our personal vehicles to other emergency responders and police officers on emergency scenes in rural settings where many times we are responding not only to our fire/EMS stations, but also directly to the emergency scenes.

In addition, per the Department of Transportation (DOT), once I am no longer an EMT/Firefighter, I am to return my plates to the DOT. I guess that means I am renting/leasing my plates and they are for identification as Fire/EMS. Those with vanity plates keep their plates. My idea, change the cost of these plates, making them the same price as standard car/truck license plates. We should not have to pay more for identifying plates versus if we were getting alumni plates, natural resource plates, sports team plates, etc.”