

**Second Regular Session  
Seventy-second General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO**

**PREAMENDED**

*This Unofficial Version Includes Committee  
Amendments Not Yet Adopted on Second Reading*

LLS NO. 20-0343.01 Jason Gelender x4330

**SENATE BILL 20-051**

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**SENATE SPONSORSHIP**

**Priola**, Moreno, Pettersen, Scott

**HOUSE SPONSORSHIP**

**Valdez A.**, Catlin, Duran, Froelich, Gray, Hooton

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**Senate Committees**

Transportation & Energy  
Finance  
Appropriations

**House Committees**

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**A BILL FOR AN ACT**

101       **CONCERNING LICENSE PLATES, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH,**  
102               **SPECIFYING THAT, IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE POTENTIAL LOST**  
103               **REGISTRATION REVENUE, THE LICENSE PLATES OF A MOTOR**  
104               **VEHICLE THAT IS CLASSIFIED AS CLASS C PERSONAL PROPERTY**  
105               **EXPIRE UPON THE SALE OR TRANSFER OF THE MOTOR VEHICLE**  
106               **AND THAT, IN ORDER TO IMPROVE LEGIBILITY AND**  
107               **ENFORCEMENT, A REVISED COLOR SCHEME IS REQUIRED FOR**  
108               **CERTAIN LICENSE PLATES MANUFACTURED ON OR AFTER A**  
109               **SPECIFIED DATE.**

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**Bill Summary**

*(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that*

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.  
*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing statute.  
Dashes through the words indicate deletions from existing statute.*

*applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov/>.)*

**Transportation Legislation Review Committee.** The bill specifies that:

- ! The license plates of a motor vehicle that is Class C personal property for purposes of the laws governing the levying of specific ownership tax and registration of vehicles expire upon the transfer of the owner's title or interest in the motor vehicle;
- ! If either the expired license plates are personalized license plates or the owner wishes to continue to use the same combination of letters or numbers on the owner's expired license plates that were not originally issued as personalized license plates, the owner retains the priority right to use the combination of letters or numbers displayed on the expired license plates to the extent provided for in current law and may apply for personalized license plates that use the combination in the manner specified in current law when registering another motor vehicle; and
- ! Any resulting incremental costs of producing and distributing additional new license plates are excluded from the calculation of the amount necessary to recover the costs of license plate, decal, and validating tab production, and distribution that is used to annually establish the amount of the fee charged to cover those costs.

Class C personal property includes passenger cars, noncommercial light trucks, and motorcycles. The bill does not apply to the transfer or assignment of an owner's interest in Class C personal property that is a horseless carriage.

On and after January 1, 2021, the bill also requires each type of license plate that is not a group special license plate and that, as of January 1, 2020, had a color scheme of dark green letters and numbers on a background of white mountains and a dark green sky to be manufactured to have a color scheme of white letters and numbers on a background of dark green mountains and a white sky. The department of revenue must exhaust its stock of license plates with the old color scheme before issuing license plates with the new color scheme.

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1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2           **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly  
3 finds and declares that:

1 (a) Recent national studies have determined that 4% of vehicles  
2 on the road in the United States are not properly registered or the  
3 registration is expired. In Colorado it is estimated that as many as 4 out  
4 of every 10 cars on the road are not properly registered and licensed.

5 (b) Vehicles out of registration compliance also commonly lack  
6 insurance coverage and emissions testing documentation.

7 (c) Unregistered and improperly licensed vehicles contribute to  
8 significant state and local shortfalls in revenue for critical transportation  
9 and other needs.

10 (d) The financial impact of traffic congestion in the United States  
11 is calculated to be \$166 billion annually, reaching \$225 billion by 2025.  
12 Readable license plates may be needed to implement traffic congestion  
13 mitigation measures in the future.

14 (e) Law enforcement and public safety officials rely on plate  
15 readability and reflectivity to maintain safety on Colorado roads during  
16 critical operations, such as an Amber alert. Seventy percent of serious  
17 crimes involve a vehicle, and license plates are a low-cost and effective  
18 way for law enforcement to identify vehicles. License plates must be  
19 readable from a safe distance and readable from a vehicle in motion.

20 (f) License plates are often the only highly reflective element on  
21 vehicles, providing a critically important safety feature for stalled  
22 vehicles at night.

23 (g) Automated tolling systems on Colorado roads require legible,  
24 readable license plates to ensure accurate record keeping and to capture  
25 revenue from tollway users during the day and at night.

26 (h) The substantial increase in new residents from other states  
27 driving vehicles that are not registered in Colorado has contributed to the

1 loss of critical revenue for transportation and other purposes.

2 (i) Despite substantial growth in the number of motor vehicles on  
3 Colorado's roads, Colorado has not implemented a periodic license plate  
4 replacement program in nearly 30 years.

5 (j) A phased-in license plate reissue program will provide for  
6 increased public safety and effectiveness of license plates while  
7 minimizing costs and maximizing convenience for drivers.

8 (k) New technology will allow for Colorado license plates to  
9 return to the legacy green mountain design.

10 (l) On average, license plates lose 50% of their reflectivity within  
11 5 to 10 years of use and the average age of motor vehicles in Colorado is  
12 7 to 10 years.

13 (2) Therefore, the general assembly declares that it is in the best  
14 interest of the people of the state of Colorado to implement a phased-in  
15 license plate reissue program that will extinguish license plates upon the  
16 sale or transfer to a new owner and require motorists to get new license  
17 plates at no additional cost to them. Phasing in new license plates in this  
18 fashion will improve registration and license plate compliance, generate  
19 new and needed revenue for transportation and other purposes, improve  
20 vehicle insurance compliance rates, improve vehicle emission control  
21 compliance rates, enhance public safety and law enforcement, improve  
22 tollway revenue capture rates, and enhance Colorado's image through a  
23 return to the legacy license plate design.

24 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 24-30-2208, **amend**  
25 (2)(b) as follows:

26 **24-30-2208. Sale of registration numbers.** (2) (b) Upon  
27 receiving the committee's request, the department of revenue shall verify

1 whether the plates are currently issued. FOR PURPOSES OF THIS  
2 SUBSECTION (2)(b) AND SUBSECTION (2)(c) OF THIS SECTION, A PLATE  
3 THAT EXPIRES DUE TO THE OPERATION OF SECTION 42-3-115 (5)(a) IS  
4 CONSIDERED CURRENTLY ISSUED UNTIL THE RIGHT OF THE OWNER OF THE  
5 MOTOR VEHICLE TO WHICH THE EXPIRED PLATE WAS AFFIXED TO APPLY TO  
6 USE THE REGISTRATION NUMBER OF THE EXPIRED PLATE WHEN  
7 REGISTERING ANOTHER MOTOR VEHICLE EXPIRES. If the plate is not  
8 currently issued, the department shall reserve the registration number  
9 until the committee notifies the department to release the registration  
10 number.

11 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 42-3-115, **add** (5) as  
12 follows:

13 **42-3-115. Registration upon transfer.** (5) (a) EXCEPT AS  
14 OTHERWISE PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (5)(b) OF THIS SECTION, ON AND  
15 AFTER JANUARY 1, 2021, WHENEVER THE OWNER OF A MOTOR VEHICLE  
16 THAT IS CLASS C PERSONAL PROPERTY, AS DEFINED IN SECTION 42-3-106  
17 (2)(c), TRANSFERS OR ASSIGNS THE OWNER'S TITLE OR INTEREST, THE  
18 NUMBER PLATES ISSUED TO THE OWNER FOR THE VEHICLE EXPIRE AND MAY  
19 NOT BE TRANSFERRED TO ANY OTHER MOTOR VEHICLE. AN OWNER OF A  
20 MOTOR VEHICLE WHOSE NUMBER PLATES THAT EXPIRE DUE TO THE  
21 OPERATION OF THIS SUBSECTION (5)(a) ARE PERSONALIZED LICENSE  
22 PLATES ISSUED PURSUANT TO SECTION 42-3-211 RETAINS THE PRIORITY  
23 RIGHT TO USE THE COMBINATION OF LETTERS OR NUMBERS DISPLAYED ON  
24 THE EXPIRED PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES TO THE EXTENT PROVIDED  
25 FOR IN SECTION 42-3-211 AND MAY, AFTER SURRENDERING THE EXPIRED  
26 PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES TO THE DEPARTMENT, APPLY FOR  
27 IDENTICAL PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES IN THE MANNER SPECIFIED IN

1 SECTION 42-3-211 WHEN REGISTERING ANOTHER MOTOR VEHICLE. IN  
2 ADDITION, AN OWNER OF A VEHICLE WHOSE NUMBER PLATES THAT EXPIRE  
3 DUE TO THE OPERATION OF THIS SUBSECTION (5)(a) WERE NOT ORIGINALLY  
4 ISSUED AS PERSONALIZED LICENSED PLATES, BUT WHO WISHES TO RETAIN  
5 THE SAME COMBINATION OF LETTERS OR NUMBERS DISPLAYED ON THE  
6 EXPIRED LICENSE PLATES RETAINS THE PRIORITY RIGHT TO USE THE  
7 COMBINATION AND MAY, AFTER SURRENDERING THE EXPIRED PLATES TO  
8 THE DEPARTMENT, APPLY FOR PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES WITH THE  
9 COMBINATION IN THE MANNER SPECIFIED IN SECTION 42-3-211 WHEN  
10 REGISTERING ANOTHER MOTOR VEHICLE.

11 (b) IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 42-12-301 (6), SUBSECTION  
12 (5)(a) OF THIS SECTION DOES NOT APPLY TO THE TRANSFER OR  
13 ASSIGNMENT OF AN OWNER'S INTEREST IN CLASS C PERSONAL PROPERTY  
14 THAT IS A HORSELESS CARRIAGE.

15 **SECTION 4.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 42-3-201, **add** (8) as  
16 follows:

17 **42-3-201. Number plates furnished - style - periodic reissuance**  
18 **- tabs - rules.** (8) ON AND AFTER JANUARY 1, 2021, EACH TYPE OF  
19 LICENSE PLATE THAT IS \_\_\_\_\_ A REGULAR OR PERSONALIZED LICENSE  
20 PLATE ISSUED FOR A PASSENGER VEHICLE, A MOTORCYCLE, OR A LIGHT  
21 TRUCK OR ISSUED TO A PERSON WITH DISABILITIES AND THAT IS NOT A  
22 GROUP LICENSE PLATE SHALL BE MANUFACTURED TO HAVE A COLOR  
23 SCHEME OF WHITE LETTERS AND NUMBERS ON A BACKGROUND OF GREEN  
24 MOUNTAINS AND A WHITE SKY. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL EXHAUST ITS  
25 EXISTING STOCK OF \_\_\_\_\_ SUCH LICENSE PLATES WITH A DIFFERENT COLOR  
26 SCHEME BEFORE ISSUING LICENSE PLATES WITH A COLOR SCHEME OF  
27 WHITE LETTERS AND NUMBERS ON A BACKGROUND OF GREEN MOUNTAINS

1 AND A WHITE SKY.

2 **SECTION 5.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 42-3-211, **amend** (5)  
3 as follows:

4 **42-3-211. Issuance of personalized plates authorized.** (5) An  
5 applicant for issuance of personalized license plates or renewal of such  
6 plates shall apply in such form and by such date as the department may  
7 require, indicating thereon the combination of letters or numbers  
8 requested as a registration number. There shall be no duplication of  
9 registration numbers, and the department may refuse to issue any  
10 combination of letters or numbers that carry connotations offensive to  
11 good taste and decency, are misleading, or duplicate any other license  
12 plates provided for in this article 3. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL APPROVE  
13 ANY APPLICATION FOR PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES RECEIVED FROM AN  
14 INDIVIDUAL WHO WISHES TO RETAIN THE SAME COMBINATION OF LETTERS  
15 OR NUMBERS DISPLAYED ON THE INDIVIDUAL'S LICENSE PLATES THAT  
16 EXPIRED DUE TO THE OPERATION OF SECTION 42-3-115 (5)(a) AND WHO  
17 HAS SURRENDERED THE EXPIRED PLATES TO THE DEPARTMENT UNLESS THE  
18 DEPARTMENT DETERMINES THAT THE COMBINATION IS MISLEADING OR  
19 DUPLICATES ANOTHER REGISTRATION NUMBER OR THAT, DUE TO  
20 EVOLVING SOCIAL MORES, THE COMBINATION, DESPITE HAVING  
21 PREVIOUSLY BEEN ISSUED, CARRIES CONNOTATIONS OFFENSIVE TO GOOD  
22 TASTE OR DECENCY.

23 **SECTION 6.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 42-3-301, **amend**  
24 (2)(a) as follows:

25 **42-3-301. License plate cash fund - license plate fees.**  
26 (2) (a) The fees imposed pursuant to subsection (1) of this section ~~shall~~  
27 ~~be~~ ARE limited to the amount necessary to recover the costs of the

1 production and distribution of any license plates, decals, or validating tabs  
2 issued pursuant to this article 3 and the related support functions provided  
3 to the department of revenue by the division AND THE AMOUNT OF ANY  
4 GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR STATE FISCAL YEAR 2020-21 MADE TO  
5 IMPLEMENT SENATE BILL 20-051, ENACTED IN 2020. WHEN THE BALANCE  
6 OF THE LICENSE PLATE CASH FUND CREATED IN SUBSECTION (1)(b) OF THIS  
7 SECTION BECOMES SUFFICIENT TO COVER ALL OF THE COSTS DESCRIBED IN  
8 SUBSECTION (1)(b) OF THIS SECTION AND TO REPAY THE AMOUNT OF ANY  
9 GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR STATE FISCAL YEAR 2020-21 MADE TO  
10 IMPLEMENT SENATE BILL 20-051, ENACTED IN 2020, THE EXECUTIVE  
11 DIRECTOR SHALL INSTRUCT THE STATE TREASURER TO TRANSFER AN  
12 AMOUNT EQUAL TO THE AMOUNT OF THE APPROPRIATION FROM THE  
13 LICENSE PLATE CASH FUND TO THE GENERAL FUND. The correctional  
14 industries advisory committee, established pursuant to section 17-24-104  
15 (2), shall annually review and recommend to the director of the division  
16 the amounts of the fees to be imposed pursuant to subsection (1) of this  
17 section. The director of the division, in cooperation and consultation with  
18 the department of revenue and the office of state planning and budgeting,  
19 shall annually establish the amounts of the fees imposed pursuant to  
20 subsection (1) of this section to recover the division's costs pursuant to  
21 this subsection (2).

22 **SECTION 7. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act  
23 takes effect January 1, 2021; except that, if a referendum petition is filed  
24 pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the state constitution against this  
25 act or an item, section, or part of this act within the ninety-day period  
26 after final adjournment of the general assembly, then the act, item,  
27 section, or part will not take effect unless approved by the people at the

1 general election to be held in November 2020 and, in such case, will take  
2 effect January 1, 2021, or on the date of the official declaration of the  
3 vote thereon by the governor, whichever is later.