

Second Regular Session  
Seventy-fifth General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 26-0731.01 Renee Leone x2695

HOUSE BILL 26-1251

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HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Joseph and Woodrow,

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

(None),

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House Committees  
Finance

Senate Committees

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A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING THE CREATION OF AN EQUAL JUSTICE LICENSE PLATE  
102 THAT A PERSON QUALIFIES FOR BY DONATING TO THE EQUAL  
103 JUSTICE AUTHORITY.

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

The bill creates the equal justice license plate (plate). An applicant becomes eligible for the plate by making a donation to the equal justice authority (authority). The department of revenue (department) will collect the donation on behalf of, and remit the money to, the authority. The authority must spend the donation in the same manner as currently

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

required by law for the equal justice fee.

In addition to the donation and the normal fees for a license plate, a person must pay 2 additional one-time fees in the amount of \$25, one of which is credited to the highway users tax fund and the other to the Colorado DRIVES vehicle services account.

The bill allows the department to seek, accept, and expend gifts, grants, and donations, and mandates that the department will not commence work on the creation of the plate until the department has received sufficient gifts, grants, and donations to cover the cost of creating the plate and any other related administrative or programming needs.

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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 that:

4 (a) Access to justice is a basic principle of the rule of law and  
5 ensures that all public and private people, institutions, and entities,  
6 including the state, are held accountable to laws that are publicly adopted,  
7 equally enforced, and independently adjudicated;

8 (b) Without access to justice, people would be unable to exercise  
9 their rights, have their voices heard, challenge discrimination, or hold  
10 decision-makers accountable;

11 (c) Providing civil legal aid to people with low incomes is vital to  
12 Colorado's missions, including those that involve providing justice for  
13 victims of intimate partner violence, ensuring that veterans receive their  
14 well-earned benefits, protecting the elder population from abuse, fighting  
15 human trafficking, and safeguarding access to necessities such as food  
16 and shelter;

17 (d) Without access to civil legal representation, laws and  
18 protections are often unenforceable for Coloradans with low incomes;

19 (e) Adequately funded legal aid in certain civil matters reinforces

1 the importance of the right to counsel to ensure a fair trial;

2 (f) Equal access to justice would have little effective meaning if  
3 an individual could not afford that right on the basis of income; and

4 (g) The donation to the equal justice authority for the purpose of  
5 obtaining the equal justice license plate supports users of Colorado courts  
6 and promotes equal access to justice, legal aid, and court efficiency, and  
7 the donation:

8 (I) Allows drivers who obtain the equal justice license plate to  
9 display their support for equal access to justice and increased court  
10 efficiency;

11 (II) Is an amount that is based on the overall cost of the services  
12 provided by the equal justice authority; and

13 (III) Is not a tax.

14 (2) Therefore, the general assembly declares that the lack of  
15 access to civil legal justice is a problem that has serious social, legal,  
16 economic, and political consequences, and the general assembly creates  
17 the equal justice license plate to:

18 (a) Provide funding for equal access to justice in Colorado;

19 (b) Provide Colorado drivers a means to display their support of  
20 equal access to justice; and

21 (c) Reaffirm the general assembly's commitment to equal access  
22 to the civil legal process.

23 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 42-3-272 as  
24 follows:

25 **42-3-272. Special plates - equal justice - legislative declaration.**

26 (1) BEGINNING ON THE EARLIER OF JANUARY 1, 2028, OR WHEN  
27 THE DEPARTMENT IS ABLE TO ISSUE THE PLATE, AND ONLY AFTER THE

1 DEPARTMENT HAS RECEIVED SUFFICIENT GIFTS, GRANTS, OR DONATIONS  
2 FROM PUBLIC OR PRIVATE SOURCES, AS PERMITTED IN SUBSECTION (7) OF  
3 THIS SECTION, TO COVER THE COST OF CREATING THE PLATE AND ANY  
4 OTHER RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE OR PROGRAMMING NEEDS, THE  
5 DEPARTMENT SHALL ISSUE SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES TO QUALIFIED  
6 APPLICANTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS SECTION FOR MOTORCYCLES,  
7 PASSENGER CARS, TRUCKS, OR NONCOMMERCIAL OR RECREATIONAL  
8 MOTOR VEHICLES THAT DO NOT EXCEED SIXTEEN THOUSAND POUNDS  
9 EMPTY WEIGHT.

10 (2) (a) THE EQUAL JUSTICE LICENSE PLATE IS ESTABLISHED.

11 (b) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL USE A DESIGN FROM THE EQUAL  
12 JUSTICE AUTHORITY, CREATED IN SECTION 13-5.7-202. THE DESIGN MUST  
13 CONFORM TO DEPARTMENT STANDARDS AND BE APPROVED BY THE  
14 DEPARTMENT.

15 (3) (a) A PERSON MAY APPLY FOR AN EQUAL JUSTICE LICENSE  
16 PLATE IF THE PERSON PAYS THE TAXES AND FEES REQUIRED IN THIS  
17 SECTION AND PAYS A DONATION, IN AN AMOUNT OF AT LEAST FIFTY  
18 DOLLARS, AS SET BY THE EQUAL JUSTICE AUTHORITY BOARD PURSUANT TO  
19 SECTION 13-5.7-208 (3), TO THE EQUAL JUSTICE AUTHORITY.

20 (b) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL NOT RENEW THE REGISTRATION OF AN  
21 EQUAL JUSTICE LICENSE PLATE UNLESS THE PERSON THAT WAS ISSUED THE  
22 LICENSE PLATE PAYS A RENEWAL DONATION, IN AN AMOUNT OF AT LEAST  
23 FIFTY DOLLARS, AS SET BY THE EQUAL JUSTICE AUTHORITY BOARD  
24 PURSUANT TO SECTION 13-5.7-208 (3), TO THE EQUAL JUSTICE AUTHORITY.

25 (c) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL COLLECT THE EQUAL JUSTICE LICENSE  
26 PLATE DONATION REQUIRED IN SUBSECTIONS (3)(a) AND (3)(b) OF THIS  
27 SECTION ON BEHALF OF THE EQUAL JUSTICE AUTHORITY IN THE SAME

1 MANNER IN WHICH THE DEPARTMENT COLLECTS OTHER TAXES AND FEES;  
2 EXCEPT THAT THE DEPARTMENT SHALL NOT TRANSMIT THE COLLECTED  
3 DONATION TO THE STATE TREASURER FOR DEPOSIT IN A STATE FUND BUT  
4 SHALL REMIT THE MONEY TO THE EQUAL JUSTICE AUTHORITY.

5 (d) THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FINDS AND DECLARES THAT  
6 DONATIONS RECEIVED UNDER SUBSECTIONS (3)(a) AND (3)(b) OF THIS  
7 SECTION ARE CUSTODIAL FUNDS AND, THEREFORE, ARE NOT SUBJECT TO  
8 APPROPRIATION OR TO SECTION 20 OF ARTICLE X OF THE STATE  
9 CONSTITUTION.

10 (4) THE AMOUNT OF THE TAXES AND FEES FOR A SPECIAL LICENSE  
11 PLATE REQUIRED UNDER THIS SECTION IS THE SAME AS THE AMOUNT OF  
12 THE TAXES AND FEES FOR A REGULAR MOTOR VEHICLE LICENSE PLATE;  
13 EXCEPT THAT THE DEPARTMENT SHALL COLLECT THE FEE SPECIFIED IN  
14 SECTION 42-3-312 AND AN ADDITIONAL ONE-TIME FEE OF TWENTY-FIVE  
15 DOLLARS FOR ISSUANCE OR REPLACEMENT OF THE SPECIAL LICENSE  
16 PLATES. THE STATE TREASURER SHALL CREDIT THE FEE TO THE HIGHWAY  
17 USERS TAX FUND CREATED IN SECTION 43-4-201.

18 (5) AN APPLICANT MAY APPLY TO THE DEPARTMENT FOR  
19 PERSONALIZED EQUAL JUSTICE LICENSE PLATES. UPON PAYMENT OF THE  
20 ADDITIONAL FEE REQUIRED BY SECTION 42-3-211 (6)(a) FOR  
21 PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES, THE DEPARTMENT MAY ISSUE THE PLATES  
22 IF THE APPLICANT COMPLIES WITH SECTION 42-3-211. IF AN APPLICANT  
23 HAS EXISTING PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES FOR A MOTOR VEHICLE, THE  
24 APPLICANT MAY TRANSFER THE COMBINATION OF LETTERS OR NUMBERS  
25 TO A NEW SET OF EQUAL JUSTICE LICENSE PLATES FOR THE VEHICLE UPON  
26 PAYING THE FEE REQUIRED BY SECTION 42-3-211 (6)(a) AND UPON  
27 TURNING IN THE EXISTING PLATES TO THE DEPARTMENT. A PERSON THAT

1 HAS OBTAINED PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES UNDER THIS SUBSECTION  
2 (5) MUST PAY THE ANNUAL FEE IMPOSED BY SECTION 42-3-211 (6)(b) TO  
3 RENEW THE PERSONALIZED PLATES. THE FEES ASSESSED UNDER THIS  
4 SUBSECTION (5) ARE IN ADDITION TO ALL OTHER APPLICABLE TAXES AND  
5 FEES.

6 (6) THE EQUAL JUSTICE AUTHORITY SHALL RECEIVE THE MONEY  
7 COLLECTED FROM AN EQUAL JUSTICE LICENSE PLATE DONATION AS SET  
8 FORTH IN SECTION 13-5.7-208 AND DISTRIBUTE THE MONEY RECEIVED IN  
9 THE MANNER SET FORTH IN SECTION 13-5.7-206 (1) AND (2).

10 (7) THE DEPARTMENT MAY SEEK, ACCEPT, AND EXPEND GIFTS,  
11 GRANTS, OR DONATIONS FROM PRIVATE OR PUBLIC SOURCES FOR THE  
12 PURPOSES SET FORTH IN THIS SECTION.

13 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **amend** 42-3-312 as  
14 follows:

15 **42-3-312. Special license plate surcharge.** In addition to any  
16 other fee imposed by this article 3, an applicant for a special license plate  
17 created by rule in accordance with section 42-3-207, as the section existed  
18 when the plate was created, personalized plates issued under section  
19 42-3-211, or special license plates issued under sections 42-3-212 to  
20 42-3-214, sections 42-3-217 to 42-3-218, sections 42-3-221 to 42-3-234,  
21 sections 42-3-237 to 42-3-258, sections 42-3-260 to 42-3-265, and  
22 sections 42-3-267 to ~~42-3-271~~ **42-3-272** shall pay an issuance fee of  
23 twenty-five dollars; except that the fee is not imposed on special license  
24 plates exempted from additional fees for the issuance of a military special  
25 license plate by section 42-3-213 (1)(b)(II). The department shall transfer  
26 the money from the fee to the state treasurer, who shall credit it to the  
27 Colorado DRIVES vehicle services account created in section 42-1-211

1 (2).

2 **SECTION 4.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 13-5.7-203, **amend**

3 (1)(i) as follows:

4 **13-5.7-203. General powers.**

5 (1) In addition to any other powers granted to the authority in this  
6 part 2, the authority has the following powers:

7 (i) To contract for and to accept any gifts, grants, OR DONATIONS,  
8 INCLUDING DONATIONS MADE TO APPLY FOR OR RENEW THE EQUAL  
9 JUSTICE LICENSE PLATE PURSUANT TO SECTION 42-3-272, and loans of  
10 funds, property, or ~~any~~ other aid in any form from the federal  
11 government, the state, ~~any~~ A state agency, or any other source, or any  
12 combination thereof, and to comply, subject to the provisions of this part  
13 2, with the terms and conditions of such contracts or the acceptance of  
14 such items;

15 **SECTION 5.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 13-5.7-206, **amend**

16 (1) as follows:

17 **13-5.7-206. Distribution of equal justice fees - purpose.**

18 (1) ~~On July 1, 2025, and each July 1 thereafter~~ EACH YEAR ON  
19 JULY 1, the authority shall ~~annually~~ distribute all money deposited into the  
20 authority's account as required by ~~section 13-5.7-205 (2)~~ SECTIONS  
21 13-5.7-205 (2) AND 13-5.7-208, less the authority's direct and indirect  
22 expenses in administering the requirements of this part 2 and any other  
23 related work completed to advance the mission of the authority. The  
24 authority shall distribute sixty-seven percent of the remaining revenue to  
25 the Colorado recipient of a federal legal services corporation field grant  
26 and thirty-three percent to qualified civil legal aid providers.

27 **SECTION 6.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 13-5.7-208 as

1 follows:

2 **13-5.7-208. Equal justice license plate - donations.**

3 (1) THE AUTHORITY MAY RECEIVE MONEY FROM THE DEPARTMENT  
4 OF REVENUE THAT WAS COLLECTED IN THE FORM OF A DONATION MADE BY  
5 A PERSON TO APPLY FOR OR RENEW THEIR REGISTRATION FOR THE EQUAL  
6 JUSTICE LICENSE PLATE PURSUANT TO SECTION 42-3-272.

7 (2) THE AUTHORITY SHALL DEPOSIT THE MONEY COLLECTED FROM  
8 DONATIONS RECEIVED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (1) OF THIS SECTION IN  
9 AN ACCOUNT IN A FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.

10 (3) THE AUTHORITY SHALL ANNUALLY SET THE REQUIRED  
11 DONATION FOR THE ISSUANCE OR RENEWAL OF THE EQUAL JUSTICE  
12 LICENSE PLATE IN AN AMOUNT OF NOT LESS THAN FIFTY DOLLARS.

13 (4) MONEY RECEIVED BY THE AUTHORITY FROM THE DEPARTMENT  
14 OF REVENUE PURSUANT TO THIS SECTION IS NOT STATE REVENUE.

15 **SECTION 7. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act  
16 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the  
17 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly (August  
18 12, 2026, if adjournment sine die is on May 13, 2026); except that, if a  
19 referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V of the  
20 state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this act  
21 within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take effect  
22 unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in  
23 November 2026 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the  
24 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.