

2025 HOUSE TRANSPORTATION

HB 1392

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee Room JW327E, State Capitol

HB 1392
1/31/2025

Relating to number plates; and to provide a penalty.
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10:31 a.m. Chairman D. Ruby opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman D. Ruby, Vice Chairman Grueneich, Representatives Christianson, Dressler, Hendrix, Johnston, Kasper, Koppelman, Maki, Morton, Osowski, Schatz

Members Absent: Representatives Finley-DeVille, Frelich

Discussion Topics:

- Increased penalties
- Yearly fee
- Higher-end vehicles
- Retail fuel theft
- Traffic citations

10:32 a.m. Representative Murphy introduced the bill and submitted testimony #33120.

10:55 a.m. Mike Rud, President, ND Petroleum Marketers Association, testified in opposition and submitted testimony #33218.

11:03 a.m. Jeff Solemsaas, testified in opposition and submitted testimony #33233.

11:06 a.m. Stephanie Engebretson, Chief of Police Association, testified in opposition.

11:07 a.m. Sergeant Evan Savageau, ND Highway Patrol, testified neutral and submitted testimony #33235.

Additional written testimony:

Paul Mutch, Mutch Gas, submitted testimony in opposition #33097.

Matt Bjornson, Bjornson Oil Company, INC., testified in opposition and submitted testimony #33145.

11:15 a.m. Chairman D. Ruby closed the hearing.

Janae Pinks, Committee Clerk

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee

My name is Paul Mutch from Larimore. I urge a NO vote on HB 1392 for the following reasons.

1) Support for Peace Officers

Having two license plates on vehicles can only be a good thing to help our Law Enforcement people to identify and track down suspects for various infractions of the law. If having two license plates is of absolutely any benefit to them and aids them in doing their jobs, I am all for it.

2) Deterrent to Retail Theft

Having a license plate on the front and back of vehicles serves as a deterrent to would-be gasoline thieves at convenience stores. If they see video cameras pointing at both plates, they will think twice before driving off without paying for the gas they just put in their cars. If a theft does occur, law enforcement will be in a position to track down the perpetrators.

Finally, if this is a cost issue, I would suggest raising license registration fees to cover the cost of the second plate. Don't take it out on Law Enforcement.

Thank you

Paul Mutch
1-30-2025

HB1392
Bill Testimony
Rep. Eric J. Murphy
District 43, Grand Forks

Chairman Ruby and the honorable members of the House Transportation Committee. This bill is an old friend with a new twist as it provides for a \$125 fee to operate a motor vehicle with a single, rear license plate. In addition, the fine for operating a motor vehicle registered in North Dakota without paying this fee and with only a single license plate results in a fine of \$200. This is a 10-fold increase in the fine and intended to drive compliance.

A change is made in NDCC 39-04-08 to charge a fee of \$125 for registration of a motor vehicle with a single plate. When drafting this bill, it was intended that this is a yearly fee paid upon yearly vehicle registration. As such, I propose modifying the language on page one, line fourteen to "yearly fee".

As noted by ND DOT, they estimate that 50% of the 16,000 higher end vehicles will be registered to use a single plate and an additional 1% of the remaining 744,967 registered vehicles will use this option. Hence, the supposition is that this fee is well tolerated by individuals who own a higher end vehicle designed to not have a front license plate.

The fiscal note is very positive with an estimated revenue of \$1,931,209 in the first year with the current language and this more than likely would be similar in year 2 of the biennium if the wording is changed to "yearly fee" as suggested. These funds would go into the Highway Tax Distribution Fund and be distributed to counties (22%), cities (12.5%), townships (2.7%), public transportation (1.5%) and to the State Highway fund (61.3%).

The costs are estimated to be less than \$5,000.

To encourage compliance with the change in 39-04-08, the fee (fine) for operating a motor vehicle with only one plate without this additional fee is \$200 and this modification is made in 39-04-11.

The strategy in this bill should reduce the angst of North Dakota law enforcement and of gas station owners with regards to motor vehicles displaying a single license plate. Simply, the likelihood that someone using a single plate on a higher end motor vehicle would drive away without paying for gasoline is extremely unexpected and low.

In the end, this is a bill that gives owners of higher end vehicles an option for registering their vehicles to operate with a single plate, reduces the angst of law enforcement and gas station owners, while providing the motoring public with something that they want and will pay for, all while providing a significant amount of new revenue that will be used to improve highway infrastructure across political subdivisions and at the state level. Simply, solve a long-term issue and provide a new source of revenue. That is a win! I stand for questions.

Hb 1392

Chairman Ruby and members of the committee.

Over the years this type of bill has been introduced and failed so many times it literally is hard to count. I believe that most legislators are here to do serious work. The habitual introduction of bills with no real value, and that cause business and law enforcement problems needs to stop.

Thank you

Matt Bjornson

Bjornson Oil Company Inc.



ND Petroleum Marketers Association

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Testimony HB 1392

January 31, 2025--House Transportation

Chairman Ruby and members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Mike Rud. I'm the President of the North Dakota Petroleum Marketers Association. NDPMA represents nearly 600 gas retailers from across the state. On behalf of our association members, I'm here urging a **"DO NOT PASS" on HB 1392. This bill is quite simply a solution in search of a problem.**

HB 1392 is another tired attempt at one license plate. The requirement for a plate on the front and back has been vetted numerous times. Each time it has been defeated. Out of respect for the law enforcement and business communities it should be beaten back again.

No one begrudges another person having a "sports" car. However, the reality is a change to one license plate will only benefit a small percentage of the population. Vanity should not be the justification for proposing a change to a law that is currently working.

Public security and safety must remain the State's top priorities. Border patrol and law enforcement are hampered by any erosion of the current requirement. Many retailers have invested large sums of money in video surveillance equipment. Convenience store owners have willingly provided much needed information, including facial recognition and license plate numbers during burglaries, Amber and Silver alerts, abductions, etc. The number one incentive for

store owners to install outdoor video surveillance has been license plate capture. Take away that incentive and you take away a valuable law enforcement tool.

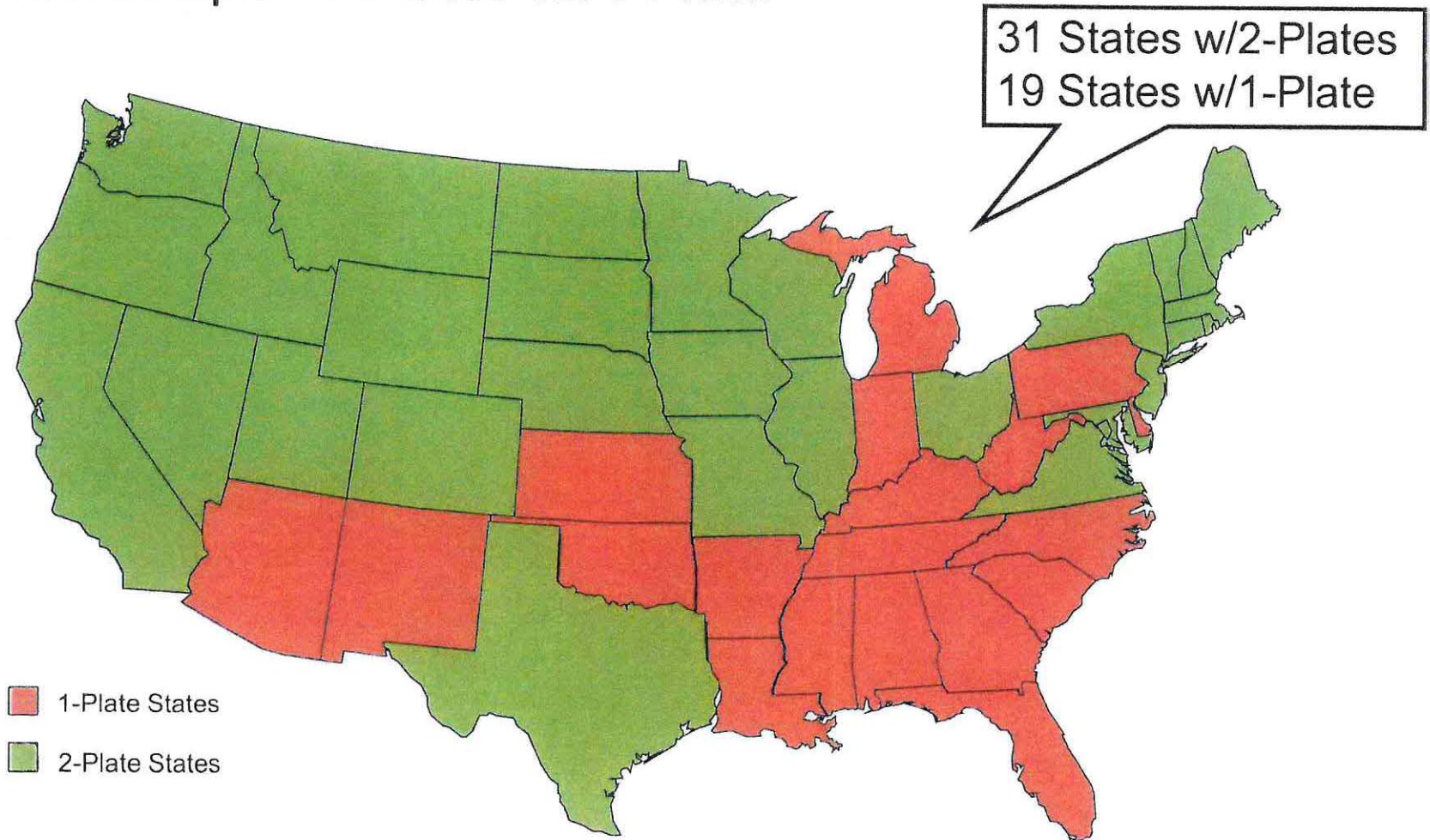
It has been testified to on numerous occasions, the two license plates now on ND vehicles have been key to quicker apprehensions. 2nd ND license plate--\$1 . Saving one life because of 2 plates.. **PRICELESS!!**

Secondly, gas drive-offs remain a problem across ND. Make no mistake, in the simplest terms drive-offs are retail fuel theft and aren't taken lightly by business and law enforcement. ND law enforcement officials have enough issues to deal with in this day and age. It's hard to place a priority on running down a drive off when you have no license plate number to follow up on in the investigation.

NDPMA believes if things aren't broken, don't fix them. NDPMA asks for a **DO NOT PASS recommendation on HB 1392.**

3/7/19 PG. 2

Current Landscape – 2 Plates vs. 1 Plate



January 28, 2025

From: Lt. Jeff Solemsaas

To: ^{House} Senate Transportation Committee

Re: HB 1392

Chairman ^{Ruby} Clemens and Senators of the House Transportation Committee,

My name is Jeff Solemsaas, I'm here to voice our opposition to HB 1295 relating to the number of license plates assigned to a motor vehicle. The Bismarck Police Department is strongly against this proposal.

I have been a law enforcement officer for almost 33 years, for the last 13 I have been assigned as the Traffic Commander for the City of Bismarck Police Department. License plate provide a valuable tool to identify vehicles. By removing the front license plate the chances of identifying an owner is greatly reduced.

Our officers frequently rely on the ability to identify vehicle that are involved in a variety of activity, both criminal and traffic related. By allowing the owners of vehicles to only display one license plate will greatly diminish the ability of the officers to identify the owner of a vehicle. I have seen numerous reports in which an officer was able to locate a vehicle that was involved in a hit and run either through the use of video cameras or witness'. Often it is the front license plate that is either captured on a video system or the witness is able to see the front license plate of a vehicle that is fleeing the scene. By reducing the ability to identify vehicles involved in hit and runs the chances of successfully locating a suspect vehicle are greatly diminished.

Obviously, these scenarios also apply to criminal investigations. Because of the rural nature of our state, many criminals use vehicles to arrive to or leave the scene of a crime. Officers are taught early on to gather license plates of vehicles leaving while responding to crimes as there is the likelihood that the suspect will be fleeing that scene. Officers would not have that ability without the front license plate on a vehicle.

The other main area of concern involves the use of license plate readers. The Bismarck Police Department and several others around the state have been using this tool for several years. I can think of numerous examples of criminal cases that were successfully cleared through the use of license plate readers. As a vehicle equipped with this technology travels through an area the system automatically records the license plates of vehicle in that same area. There have been several occasions in which officers have been able to identify a vehicle by going back through that collected data and locating the suspect vehicle.

In conclusion I ask that you reject this bill and maintain the requirement of two license plates on all vehicles. By eliminating the requirement for a front license plate the likelihood of our citizens being a victim of criminal acts would be increased.

I appreciate your consideration and time relating to this bill.

**69th Legislative Assembly**

Neutral Testimony

House Bill No. 1392**House Transportation Committee**

January 31, 2025

TESTIMONY OF

Sergeant Evan Savageau

Good morning, Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today regarding House Bill 1392.

For the record, my name is Sergeant Evan Savageau, and I serve with the North Dakota Highway Patrol. I am here to provide neutral testimony on behalf of the agency regarding the current language of this bill. I would like to raise several considerations for the committee's further discussion.

As law enforcement officers, we are trained to recognize traffic violations and take enforcement action as appropriate. Under North Dakota Century Code (NDCC), law enforcement observes violations and responds by initiating routine traffic stops. When conducting these stops, officers consider the safety of their actions, factoring in traffic flow and patterns. When a violation is observed law enforcement will activate emergency red and blue lights to initiate the traffic stop. This process happens quickly, usually within seconds or minutes, to create a safe stop and avoid placing other motorists in danger.

As currently written, the bill proposes a mechanism for verifying whether a citizen is exempt from the requirement to display two license plates. This verification can only occur after a traffic stop has occurred. Once the stop is made, law enforcement will carry out the standard procedure of verifying the individual's driver's license, registration, and insurance. This process requires time, both to ensure the information is accurate and to complete the stop itself.

An issue could arise in situations where, while verifying this information, an officer finds other violations or detects the odor of an alcoholic beverage, marijuana, or other signs of potential criminal activity. In these cases, even if the individual is confirmed to be allowed to operate with only one plate, the officer will act in good faith and pursue an investigation into possible impairment or criminal activity.

As written, the bill will create situations where law enforcement is placed in a difficult position, given the potential for these kinds of interactions. Officers receive extensive training, both at the academy and through ongoing education, to recognize signs of

impairment or criminal activity. However, the language of this bill could inadvertently complicate the process of ensuring safety and public security during these stops.

With that in mind, we respectfully ask the committee to revisit the language of the bill and consider adjustments that account for these potential challenges in law enforcement interactions.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee Room JW327E, State Capitol

HB 1392
2/6/2025

Relating to number plates; and to provide a penalty.
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10:38 a.m. Chairman D. Ruby opened the meeting.

Members Present: Chairman D. Ruby, Vice Chairman Grueneich, Representatives Christianson, Dressler, Finley-DeVille, Frelich, Johnston, Hendrix, Kasper, Maki, Morton, Osowski, Schatz
Members Absent: Representative Koppelman

Discussion Topics:

- Law Enforcement safety
- One plate system
- Associated fees

10:39 a.m. Representative Kasper moved a Do Not Pass.

10:39 a.m. Representative Schatz seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Dan Ruby	Y
Representative Jim Grueneich	Y
Representative Nels Christianson	Y
Representative Ty Dressler	N
Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille	Y
Representative Kathy Frelich	Y
Representative Jared Hendrix	Y
Representative Daniel Johnston	N
Representative Jim Kasper	Y
Representative Ben Koppelman	AB
Representative Roger A. Maki	N
Representative Desiree Morton	Y
Representative Doug Osowski	Y
Representative Mike Schatz	Y

10:43 a.m. Motion passed 10-3-1.

10:43 a.m. Representative Grueneich will carry the bill.

10:44 a.m. Chairman D. Ruby closed the meeting.

Janae Pinks, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1392 ([25.0608.01000](#))

Transportation Committee (Rep. D. Ruby, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** (10 YEAS, 3 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1392 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.