

1 SENATE BILL

2 **57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2026**

3 INTRODUCED BY

4 Michael Padilla

10 AN ACT

11 RELATING TO MOTOR VEHICLES; REQUIRING REGISTRATION PLATES TO BE
12 ATTACHED TO THE FRONT AND THE REAR OF A MOTOR VEHICLE;
13 PROVIDING EXCEPTIONS.

15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

16 SECTION 1. Section 66-3-10 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,
17 Chapter 35, Section 30, as amended) is amended to read:

18 "66-3-10. DEPARTMENT TO ISSUE CERTIFICATE OF TITLE,
19 EVIDENCE OF REGISTRATION, REGISTRATION PLATE AND VALIDATION
20 STICKER--RELEASE OF LIEN--ODOMETER STATEMENT.--

21 A. The department, upon registration of a vehicle,
22 shall issue a certificate of title and evidence of
23 registration; an odometer statement may appear on one or both
24 of these documents.

25 B. Except for certificates of title issued pursuant

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1 to Section 66-3-2, 66-3-27 or 66-3-423 NMSA 1978 and for
2 manufactured homes, school buses, state government vehicles,
3 motorcycles and off-highway motor vehicles, upon issuance of a
4 new certificate of title or upon transfer of a certificate of
5 title, the department shall issue [~~a~~] registration [~~plate~~]
6 plates and [~~a~~] validation [~~sticker~~] stickers to the owner of
7 the vehicle.

8 C. The registration evidence shall be delivered to
9 the owner and shall contain upon its face the date issued, the
10 name and address of the owner, the registration number assigned
11 to the owner and such description of the vehicle registered to
12 the owner as determined by the secretary.

13 D. The certificate of title shall contain the
14 identical information required on the registration evidence and
15 in addition a statement of the owner's title and of all liens
16 and encumbrances upon the vehicle.

17 E. The certificate of title shall contain a space
18 for the release of any lien, space for assignment of title or
19 interest and warranty by the owner and space for notation of
20 liens and encumbrances upon the vehicle at the time of
21 transfer.

22 F. The certificate of title shall be delivered to
23 the owner in the event no lien or encumbrances appear thereon,
24 otherwise the certificate of title shall be delivered to the
25 person named to receive it in the application for certificate.

1 G. Whenever the owner of a vehicle subject to
2 registration transfers the person's title or interest in the
3 vehicle to a nonresident who desires to title the vehicle in
4 the state of the nonresident's residence, the department upon
5 receiving application and the payment of the proper fee shall
6 issue a certificate of title only and record on the certificate
7 all liens and encumbrances."

8 SECTION 2. Section 66-3-14 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,
9 Chapter 35, Section 34, as amended) is amended to read:

10 "66-3-14. REGISTRATION PLATES OR VALIDATING STICKERS TO
11 BE FURNISHED BY DEPARTMENT--REFLECTIVE MATERIAL.--

12 A. The department upon registering a vehicle shall
13 issue [~~a~~] registration [~~plate~~] plates or [~~a~~] validating
14 [~~sticker~~] stickers to the owner of the vehicle, except for a
15 trailer, a tractor, a manufactured home, a motorcycle or an
16 off-highway motor vehicle, for which the department shall issue
17 one registration plate or validating sticker. The validating
18 [~~sticker~~] stickers may be designed and required to be placed on
19 the registration [~~plate~~] plates or elsewhere on the vehicle as
20 prescribed by the department.

21 B. Each registration plate shall have a background
22 of reflective material such that the registration number
23 assigned to the vehicle is plainly legible from a distance of
24 one hundred feet at night. The colors shall include those of
25 the state flag, except prestige and special plates.

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1 C. Each registration plate shall have displayed
2 upon it:

3 (1) the registration number assigned to the
4 person to whom it was issued; and

5 (2) the name of this state.

6 D. The department shall issue no registration
7 plates for privately owned vehicles that contain the words
8 "staff officer" or any other title except as otherwise provided
9 by law.

10 E. All registration plates for private vehicles
11 shall be alike in form except for the owner's registration
12 number. The department shall adopt registration number systems
13 for registration plates.

14 F. In lieu of or in addition to [~~a~~] registration
15 [~~plate or sticker~~] plates or stickers for commercial motor
16 vehicles, the department may issue an electronic identifying
17 device."

18 SECTION 3. Section 66-3-17 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,
19 Chapter 35, Section 37, as amended) is amended to read:

20 "66-3-17. REGISTRATION PLATE--REPLACEMENT OF PLATE.--

21 A. Succeeding registration renewals of the
22 registration [~~plate~~] plates issued under Section 66-3-14 NMSA
23 1978 shall cause the division to issue [~~a~~] validating [~~sticker~~]
24 stickers only, except as provided in Subsections B and C of
25 this section.

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1 B. The person to whom the ~~[plate is]~~ plates are
2 issued may, at any time, apply for the issuance of [a]
3 duplicate or replacement ~~[plate]~~ plates, and upon the surrender
4 of the registration ~~[plate he]~~ plates the person then has,
5 along with the payment of a reasonable fee set by the director
6 that will cover the cost of the production and distribution of
7 the ~~[plate]~~ plates, the applicant shall be issued [a] duplicate
8 or replacement ~~[plate]~~ plates.

9 C. Any peace officer may, upon discovering that
10 ~~[the]~~ a registration plate of any vehicle is illegible because
11 of wear or damage or other cause, issue a citation to the owner
12 or operator of the vehicle. The citation shall provide that
13 the owner shall, within thirty days from the date of the
14 citation, apply for and obtain a duplicate or replacement plate
15 from the division."

16 SECTION 4. Section 66-3-18 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,
17 Chapter 35, Section 38, as amended) is amended to read:

18 "66-3-18. DISPLAY OF REGISTRATION PLATES AND TEMPORARY
19 REGISTRATION PERMITS--DISPLAYS PROHIBITED AND ALLOWED.--

20 A. The registration ~~[plate]~~ plates shall be
21 attached to the front and the rear of the vehicle for which ~~[it~~
22 ~~is]~~ the plates are issued, ~~[however, the registration plate~~
23 ~~shall be attached to the front of a road tractor or truck~~
24 ~~tractor]~~ except for a trailer, a tractor, a manufactured home,
25 a motorcycle or an off-highway motor vehicle, in which case the

1 registration plate shall be attached to the rear of the
2 vehicle. The ~~[plate]~~ plates shall be securely fastened at all
3 times in a fixed horizontal position at a height of not less
4 than twelve inches from the ground, measuring from the bottom
5 of the plate. ~~[It]~~ The plates shall be in a place and position
6 so as to be clearly visible, and ~~[it]~~ the plates shall be
7 maintained free from foreign material and in a condition to be
8 clearly legible.

9 B. A demonstration or temporary registration permit
10 shall be firmly affixed to the inside left rear window of the
11 vehicle to which it is issued, unless such display presents a
12 safety hazard or the demonstration or temporary registration
13 permit is not visible or readable from that position, in which
14 case, the demonstration or temporary registration permit shall
15 be displayed in such a manner that it is clearly visible from
16 the rear or left side of the vehicle.

17 C. No vehicle while being operated on the highways
18 of this state shall have displayed either on the front or the
19 rear of the vehicle any registration plate, including
20 validating sticker, other than one issued or validated for the
21 current registration period by the department or any other
22 licensing authority having jurisdiction over the vehicle. No
23 expired registration plate or validating sticker shall be
24 displayed on the vehicle. ~~[other than an expired special~~
25 ~~registration plate, which may be exhibited on the front of the~~

1 ~~vehicle~~

2 ~~D. Nothing contained in this section shall be~~
3 ~~construed as prohibiting the use of a promotional or~~
4 ~~advertising plate on the front of the vehicle.~~

5 ~~E.]~~ D. A violation of a provision of this section
6 is a penalty assessment misdemeanor."

7 SECTION 5. Section 66-3-19 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,
8 Chapter 35, Section 39, as amended by Laws 1995, Chapter 44,
9 Section 2 and also by Laws 1995, Chapter 135, Section 12) is
10 amended to read:

11 "66-3-19. RENEWAL OF REGISTRATION--STAGGERED PERIOD FOR
12 VEHICLES--EXCEPTION FOR MANUFACTURED HOMES AND FREIGHT
13 TRAILERS--LATE REGISTRATION.--

14 A. The department, in order to operate a more
15 uniform system of vehicle registration, is authorized for
16 certain or all vehicles to:

17 (1) prorate registration fees by quarterly
18 increments for periods in excess of twelve months, but not
19 exceeding twenty-four months;

20 (2) determine the specific registered vehicle
21 owners and the numbers of these to be assigned to each
22 registration period in order to maintain the system;

23 (3) notify each registered vehicle owner by
24 mail at the last known address within an appropriate period
25 prior to the expiration of the current registration period.

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1 The notice shall include a renewal-of-registration application
2 form specifying the amount of registration fees due and the
3 specific dates of the registration period covered by the
4 renewal application;

5 (4) provide for the retention of registration
6 plates;

7 (5) provide for the issuance of validating
8 stickers to be affixed either to retained registration plates
9 or elsewhere on the vehicles as prescribed by the department to
10 signify the registration of the vehicles for the current
11 registration period; and

12 (6) provide for identification purposes
13 clearly recognizable distinctions between current and expired
14 registration plates and validation stickers. To this end, the
15 department, by whatever system or device the secretary may
16 direct that is approved by the chief of the New Mexico state
17 police division of the department of public safety, shall
18 ensure a practicable display of the proper and current
19 registration of vehicles.

20 B. Certificates of title need not be renewed
21 annually but shall remain valid until canceled by the
22 department for cause or upon transfer of any interest shown in
23 the certificate of title.

24 C. The vehicle registration of vehicles registered
25 under the provisions of Subsection A of this section expires on

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1 the last day of the period for which the vehicle has been
2 registered. Every vehicle registration other than vehicles
3 registered in accordance with Subsection A of this section,
4 manufactured homes and freight trailers expires December 31.
5 The department may receive applications for renewal of
6 registration and may issue new registration evidence and
7 registration plates or validating stickers at any time prior to
8 expiration of the current registration.

9 D. The registration of a manufactured home or
10 freight trailer need not be renewed annually, and the initial
11 registration shall be effective and considered a current
12 registration for the purpose of the Motor Vehicle Code as long
13 as the ownership of the vehicle is not transferred. The
14 transfer of title provisions of the Motor Vehicle Code do apply
15 to manufactured homes and freight trailers, and the transferee
16 is required to register the vehicle in accordance with Section
17 66-3-103 NMSA 1978. The department is authorized and directed
18 to issue distinctive registration plates for manufactured homes
19 and freight trailers that identify the plates as permanent
20 registration plates.

21 E. It is unlawful to operate or transport or cause
22 to be transported upon any highways in this state any vehicle,
23 except a commercial motor vehicle registered in another state
24 or a manufactured home, subject to registration under the
25 provisions of the Motor Vehicle Code without having paid the

1 registration fee or without having secured and constantly
2 displayed the registration [~~plate~~] plates required by the Motor
3 Vehicle Code. If a vehicle, other than a manufactured home, is
4 operated or transported after the expiration of the vehicle
5 registration, the owner of the vehicle is subject to a penalty
6 of the greater of ten dollars (\$10.00) or, if the vehicle is
7 operated or transported thirty-one or more days after the
8 expiration of the registration, an amount equal to seventy-five
9 percent of the registration fee. Any duly appointed deputy or
10 agent of the department has the authority to seize the vehicle
11 and hold it until the fee, penalty and any fine that may be
12 imposed for violation of law are paid and may sell the vehicle
13 in the manner provided by law for the distraint and sale of
14 personal property.

15 F. It is unlawful to operate, transport or cause to
16 be transported upon any highways in this state or to maintain
17 in any place in this state a manufactured home subject to
18 registration under the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Code
19 without having paid the registration fee or without having
20 secured and constantly displayed the registration plate
21 required by the Motor Vehicle Code. Violation of this
22 subsection subjects the owner to a penalty of five dollars
23 (\$5.00), and no other administrative penalty for failure to
24 register under the Motor Vehicle Code shall be imposed upon
25 manufactured homes that are subject to the provisions of

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1 Section 66-6-10 NMSA 1978. Any duly appointed deputy or agent
2 of the department has authority to seize the manufactured home
3 and hold it until the fee, penalties and any fine that may be
4 imposed for violation of law are paid and may sell the
5 manufactured home in the manner provided by law for the
6 distraint and sale of personal property.

7 G. This section authorizes a staggered system of
8 registration of vehicles."

9 SECTION 6. Section 66-3-104 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,
10 Chapter 35, Section 51, as amended) is amended to read:

11 "66-3-104. USE OF PLATE AND REGISTRATION NUMBER ON
12 ANOTHER VEHICLE--TRANSFER OF REGISTRATION.--

13 A. When the owner of a registered vehicle assigns
14 title or interest to the vehicle, the registration of that
15 vehicle expires, unless the vehicle is registered for an
16 extended registration period and the owner applies to have the
17 registration number assigned to another vehicle as provided in
18 Subsection B of this section.

19 B. When the owner of a registered vehicle assigns
20 title or interest to the vehicle, ~~[he]~~ the owner shall remove
21 and retain the registration ~~[plate]~~ plates from the vehicle
22 and, within thirty days of the transfer, either make
23 application to have the registration number assigned to another
24 vehicle of the same class or forward the ~~[plate]~~ plates to the
25 department or its authorized agent to be destroyed. The

1 transfer of the registration [~~plate~~] plates shall be permitted
2 only if the application for transfer is made in the name of the
3 original registered owner unless the owner's name has been
4 changed by marriage, divorce or court order.

5 C. The registration [~~plate~~] plates shall not be
6 displayed upon the newly acquired vehicle until the
7 registration of the vehicle has been completed and a new
8 registration certificate issued. However, the temporary
9 retail-sale permit issued for the vehicle by the dealer
10 pursuant to the provisions of Section 66-3-6 NMSA 1978 may be
11 securely attached to the [~~plate~~] plates to be transferred and
12 displayed in accordance with Subsection A of Section 66-3-18
13 NMSA 1978."

14 SECTION 7. Section 66-3-406 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,
15 Chapter 35, Section 85, as amended) is amended to read:

16 "66-3-406. SPECIAL REGISTRATION PLATES FOR PRIVATE
17 VEHICLES.--

18 A. Upon compliance with all laws relating to
19 registration and licensing of motor vehicles and upon
20 application to the division, special registration plates shall
21 be furnished for vehicles owned by:

- 22 (1) elected state officials;
23 (2) members of the legislature;
24 (3) the chief clerks of the house of
25 representatives and of the senate;

1 (4) the sergeants at arms of the house of
2 representatives and of the senate; and

3 (5) disabled persons, pursuant to Section
4 66-3-16 NMSA 1978.

5 B. Special registration plates furnished under this
6 section shall identify the officials, members and disabled
7 persons as such. If legislators, the special registration
8 plates shall indicate whether they are members of the house of
9 representatives or of the senate.

10 C. When the ownership of the vehicle for which [a]
11 special registration [~~plate has~~] plates have been furnished by
12 the division changes or the holder ceases to qualify, the
13 special registration [~~plate~~] plates shall immediately be
14 removed from the vehicle by the holder of the special
15 registration [~~plate~~] plates and returned to the director, at
16 which time the person removing the special registration [~~plate~~]
17 plates shall receive [a] regular registration [~~plate~~] plates
18 for the vehicle.

19 D. The holder of [a] special registration [~~plate~~]
20 plates may transfer [~~his~~] the special registration [~~plate~~]
21 plates from one vehicle to another during the year in which the
22 [~~plate is~~] plates are valid upon application to the director
23 for the transfer. If a transfer is made, the owner of the
24 vehicle from which the special registration [~~plate is~~] plates
25 are removed may receive [a] regular registration [~~plate~~] plates

1 upon payment of the fees established by law.

2 E. The holder of [~~a~~] special registration [~~plate~~]
3 plates pursuant to Paragraph (2) of Subsection A of this
4 section may simultaneously hold a regular registration for the
5 same vehicle. The division shall, by rule, provide for
6 maintenance of simultaneous registration records."

7 SECTION 8. Section 66-3-407 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1978,
8 Chapter 35, Section 86) is amended to read:

9 "66-3-407. SPECIAL REGISTRATION PLATES FOR PRIVATE
10 VEHICLES USED IN PUBLIC SERVICE.--

11 A. Upon compliance with all laws relating to
12 registration and licensing of motor vehicles and upon
13 application to the division and the payment of necessary fees,
14 special registration plates shall be furnished for motor
15 vehicles owned by members of an organized group committed under
16 its charter or bylaws to perform such services as are
17 reasonably related to the public safety or welfare.

18 B. Special [~~license~~] registration plates furnished
19 under this section shall identify the members as belonging to
20 the particular unit and shall be of such design, and cost such
21 additional fee of not less than fifteen dollars (\$15.00), as
22 the division in its discretion may provide.

23 C. At the time of delivery of the special [~~plate~~]
24 registration plates, the member shall surrender [~~his~~] the
25 member's current registration [~~plate~~] plates issued for the

1 motor vehicle if any [~~has~~] have been issued.

2 D. Each member shall only be entitled to one set of
3 special [~~plate~~] registration plates, and when the ownership of
4 the motor vehicle for which the [~~plate has~~] plates have been
5 furnished by the division changes or the owner ceases to be a
6 member of the organization, the special [~~plate~~] registration
7 plates shall immediately be removed from the vehicle by the
8 holder of the special [~~plate~~] registration plates and returned
9 to the director, at which time [~~it~~] the special registration
10 plates shall be exchanged for [~~a~~] regular registration [~~plate~~]
11 plates.

12 E. The holder of [~~a~~] special [~~plate~~] registration
13 plates may transfer [~~his~~] the holder's special [~~plate~~]
14 registration plates from one vehicle to another during the year
15 in which the [~~plate is~~] plates are valid upon application to
16 the director for transfer. If [~~such~~] a transfer is made, the
17 owner of the vehicle from which the [~~plate is~~] plates are
18 removed may not receive [~~a~~] regular registration [~~plate~~] plates
19 except upon payment of the fees established by law."

20 SECTION 9. Section 66-3-407.1 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1989,
21 Chapter 87, Section 1) is amended to read:

22 "66-3-407.1. SPECIAL REGISTRATION PLATES.--Any person who
23 is entitled to [~~a~~] special registration [~~plate~~] plates, as
24 provided for in Sections 66-3-405 through 66-3-407 NMSA 1978,
25 and subsequently fails to qualify for such [~~a~~] special

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1 registration [~~plate~~] plates shall remove the special
2 registration [~~plate~~] plates no later than January 1 of the year
3 following the year in which the person failed to qualify for
4 the special registration [~~plate~~] plates."

5 SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the
6 provisions of this act is January 1, 2027.

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