



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL ANALYSIS

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House Bill 4927 (Substitute S-2 as reported)
Sponsor: Representative Chris Ward
House Committee: Transportation
Senate Committee: Transportation

Date Completed: 2-5-04

RATIONALE

The Thin Blue Line is a nonprofit, volunteer organization that exists to assist and support the families of injured or deceased law enforcement officers with financial, emotional, physical, and medical needs that arise upon an officer's injury or death. According to the Disabled Police Officers Counseling Center, nationally, more than 50,000 assaults are committed against police officers each year. Reportedly, one police officer is injured every 25 minutes. Of these, only one in nine eventually is able to return to work. It has been suggested that a fund-raising license plate should be created to help support the Thin Blue Line in providing services to families.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to require the Secretary of State to develop and issue a State-sponsored Thin Blue Line fund-raising registration plate and matching collector plate; and require donations collected from the sale of the plate to be credited to the Thin Blue Line of Michigan to provide assistance and support to the families of injured or deceased law enforcement officers. The bill is tie-barred to Senate Bill 785, which would require a \$15,000 start-up fee and set sales goals for specialty fund-raising plates.

In conjunction with the Thin Blue Line of Michigan, the Secretary of State would have to design the plate. The words "Thin Blue Line" would have to be inscribed on it, and the word "Michigan" would have to appear on it.

The owner of a vehicle could apply for a Thin Blue Line plate, instead of a standard registration plate, on a form prescribed by the

Secretary of State, as provided in Section 811f. (Under Section 811f, an application for an original fund-raising plate must be accompanied by a \$25 fund-raising donation, payment of the regular registration tax, and a \$10 service fee. An application for renewal of a fund-raising plate must be accompanied by payment of the regular registration tax and a \$10 donation.) The Secretary of State would have to issue a collector plate as prescribed in Section 811g (which provides for the development of a collector plate and requires a \$25 donation and a \$10 service fee).

The Secretary of State would have to transfer the donation money to the State Treasurer, who would have to credit the money to the "Thin Blue Line Fund", which the bill would create within the State Treasury. The State Treasurer could receive money or other assets from any source for deposit into the Fund. He or she would have to direct investment of the Fund, and credit to it interest and earnings from Fund investments. Money in the Fund at the close of the fiscal year would remain in the Fund and not lapse to the General Fund.

The State Treasurer would have to disburse the money on a quarterly basis to the Thin Blue Line of Michigan, P.O. Box 415, Howell, Michigan 48844-0415, or a successor address. By February 1, 2005, and annually thereafter, the organization would have to report to the State Treasurer, and include a summary of expenditures of the money received during the preceding year. The Thin Blue Line would have to spend the money solely to assist and support the families of injured or deceased officers of law enforcement agencies within the State.

Proposed MCL 257.811q & 257.811r

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

When a police officer sustains a disabling injury in the line of duty, the officer and his or her family may need help coping with the difficulties associated with an untimely and unplanned ending to a career. An injured officer might face obstacles in obtaining prolonged medical treatment or physical therapy, workers' compensation, or assistance in learning new occupational skills or finding another job, or adjusting to the fact that he or she might not be able to work at all. If an officer is killed, his or her family may need counseling or assistance in dealing with the officer's estate and financial matters. The Thin Blue Line provides invaluable services for the dedicated people throughout the State who have risked their lives for public safety, as well as their families. A license plate would provide a simple way for people to show their support for such a worthy cause and assist it financially.

Opposing Argument

Multiple license plate designs can create confusion for law enforcement officers and the public. Although fund-raising plates might support worthy causes, the ultimate purpose of a license plate is vehicle registration and identification. A person can send a direct donation to an organization he or she wishes to support without purchasing a specialty license plate.

Legislative Analyst: Julie Koval

FISCAL IMPACT

Revenue generated for special causes from the sale of seven fund-raising plates in FY 2002-03 totaled \$1.3 million (from original and renewal transactions). The sale of university fund-raising plates generated \$1.1 million in FY 2002-03. The revenue that would be generated from the Thin Blue Line fund-raising plate is not determinable. The Department of State's cost to develop the new plate would be covered by the \$15,000 paid by the organization requesting the plate, pursuant to Senate Bill 785.

Fiscal Analyst: Bill Bowerman

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.