

HISTORY OF THE COMMISSION ON SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES AND TYPES OF SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES IN NEVADA

COMMISSION ON SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES

The plain metal tags that have adorned registered vehicles for decades, providing a means to identify a vehicle and its owner, were once easily distinguishable between states' standard issue designs. Currently, several states offer more than 100 different designs to allow people to demonstrate their support for special causes and professional sports teams or to identify themselves as members of certain organizations. Special license plates differ in design from the standard state license plate and include both special interest fundraising plates and other types of plates.

In Nevada, prior to establishment of the Commission on Special License Plates in 2003, special license plates were authorized solely through legislative action. The earliest special plates were intended to identify public-owned vehicles that were exempt from the registration fees and to identify Nevada members of the United States Congress. Over the years, bills were enacted authorizing additional special plates to honor certain military veterans and recognize public service and certain other groups.

In 2003, the Legislature enacted [Assembly Bill 358](#) to provide another means of authorizing special plates in addition to direct legislative authorization. Among other things, the bill created the Commission on Special License Plates and charged the Commission with the task of recommending approval of applications for special license plates prior to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) designing and distributing the plates. The Commission consists of five voting members and three nonvoting members. The voting members must be legislators, including the legislators who served as chairs of the Senate and Assembly Committees on Transportation during the most recent legislative session, or their designees. The nonvoting members are the directors of the DMV, the Department of Public Safety, and the Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, or their designees.

In 2007, [Senate Bill 481](#) required the Commission to approve or disapprove any application for a special license plate authorized by an act of the Legislature. The Legislature pledged that if a new special license plate is authorized by an act of the Legislature after January 1, 2007, the license plate may not be issued by the DMV unless the Commission approves the application for the new plate. In 2013, the Legislature passed [AB 455](#), which, among other things, clarified the authority of the Commission to approve or disapprove applications for special plates. The bill provided that the Commission shall recommend to the DMV that it approve or disapprove applications for special plates.

SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES IN NEVADA

The 1931 Legislature enacted SB 59 (Chapter 202, *Statutes of Nevada*), which was a comprehensive transportation measure that required the registration of motor vehicles, trailers, and semitrailers and provided for the imposition of vehicle registration fees. The bill required that one license plate be furnished for each registered motorcycle and semitrailer and two license plates be provided to each motor vehicle and trailer. The Motor Vehicle Fund ([Nevada Revised Statutes \(NRS\) 482.180](#)) was established by the measure as a separate account in the state treasury. The bill provided for “suitable distinguishing plates” for public-owned vehicles that were exempt from the registration fees, and it designated the secretary of state as the “vehicle commissioner” of the small state with a population of approximately 90,000.

The distinguishing plates for public-owned vehicles may have been Nevada’s first special license plates, but there are now many different types of special license plates. As of March 31, 2018, there were 277,926 active special license plates and the plates had generated approximately \$66.4 million in revenue since Fiscal Year 1998. The most widely issued plate has been the Las Vegas Commemorative plate with 91,891 active plates. This plate has generated approximately \$24.1 million in revenue. Revenue from a special license plate that is returned to an organization is generated through an initial issuance fee of \$15 to \$25 and a renewal fee of \$10 to \$20, depending on the design. These fees are in addition to all other applicable registration and license fees and governmental services taxes. A [table](#) showing the number of plates and revenue by year was discussed at the May 11, 2018, meeting of the Commission.

The Legislature initially placed a 25-design cap on the production of special license plates. The 2011 Legislature passed [SB 408](#) which raised the maximum number of separate designs of special license plates that the DMV may issue at any one time from 25 to 30. Subsection 2 of [NRS 482.367008](#) provides for the limit of 30 special license plates that may be authorized by the Commission in what is commonly referred to as the “first tier.” For plates included in this tier, an organization must post a surety bond with the DMV in the amount of \$5,000 and maintain at least 1,000 active registrations.

NOTE: Pursuant to NRS 482.367008, the following special license plates are not included in the count toward the 30 active plate limit:

- Vegas Golden Knights ([NRS 482.3746](#));
- Eagle Scout in Boy Scouts of America ([NRS 482.3751](#));
- Girl Scout Gold Award by Girl Scouts of America ([NRS 482.3752](#));
- Decorated Peace Officer ([NRS 482.3757](#));

- Veteran of Armed Forces of United States Awarded Silver Star or Bronze Star Medal with “V” device, Combat V, or Combat Distinguishing Device ([NRS 482.3783](#));
- Family member of person killed in line of duty while on active duty in Armed Forces of United States ([NRS 482.3785](#));
- Family member of person who died as result of injuries sustained while on active duty in Armed Forces of United States ([NRS 482.3787](#)); or
- 150th anniversary of Nevada’s admission into the Union ([NRS 482.37901](#)).

The 2013 Legislature passed [AB 189](#), which created a “second tier” of not more than five special license plates that may be issued by the DMV. Codified in subsection 3 of [NRS 482.367008](#), an applicant for a second tier special license plate must post a \$20,000 surety bond and maintain at least 3,000 active registrations.

The Legislature also provided a mechanism to cease issuance of low-demand plates. Many of the special license plates originally approved by the Legislature required a minimum of 250 active registrations, unlike special license plates approved or recommended by the Commission, which require 1,000 active registrations. In an effort to make the minimum number of active registrations consistent, members of the Commission suggested requiring all special license plates included in the 30-cap limit to have a minimum of 1,000 active registrations. [Assembly Bill 244](#), codified in [NRS 482.367008](#), was enacted by the 2013 Legislature to set the minimum number of active registrations for special license plates at 1,000 for tier 1 license plates and 3,000 for tier 2 license plates.

Under the provisions of NRS 482.367008, the mechanism to cease issuance of low-demand special license plates requires the DMV, on October 1 of each year, to review the active plate counts for each special license plate available for issuance for at least 12 months. If the minimum number of required active registrations is not met, appropriate notice is provided to the organization and if active registrations are not met by December 31, the DMV will cease production of that plate. However, this does not prohibit current holders from renewing those plates.

The following tables present the different plates approved over the years by type. Each table includes the statute authorizing the plate, the year of initial adoption listed in chronological order, and the date the plate was discontinued, if any.

A. Special License Plates Associated with Military or Public Service or Membership in or Affiliation with Certain Groups

Plates Approved by the Legislature for Military, Public Service, or Certain Groups			
<i>Group</i>	<i>NRS</i>	<i>Year Adopted</i>	<i>Year Discontinued¹</i>
Exempt public-owned vehicles	482.368	1931	
United States Senators and Representatives	482.370	1931	
Holder of license for amateur radio station	482.375	1951	
Governor and Lieutenant Governor	482.373	1967	
Legislators, Supreme Court justices and Court of Appeals judges	482.374	1971	
Nevada National Guard	482.376	1973	
Disabled veterans and ex-prisoners of war	482.377	1977	
Member of the press	482.3672	1981	
Honorary consul of foreign country	482.3675	1983	
Recipient of Congressional Medal of Honor	482.378	1985	
Secretary of State, State Treasurer, State Controller, and Attorney General	482.372	1985	
Veteran of Armed Forces of United States who survived attack on Pearl Harbor	482.3765	1987	
Nevada Wing of Civil Air Patrol	482.3755	1991	
Veteran of Armed Forces of United States awarded Purple Heart	482.3775	1991	
Outreach programs and services for veterans and their families ²	482.3763	1993	
Collegiate license plates	482.3747	1993	
Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons	482.3748	1997	
Hall of Fame Athletes	482.3749	1997	
Professional full-time salaried firefighters	482.3753	1997	
Volunteer firefighters	482.3754	2001	
Family member of person killed in line of duty while on active duty in Armed Forces of United States	482.3785	2009	
Family member of person who died as result of injuries sustained while on active duty in Armed Forces of United States	482.3787	2011	
Peace Officer recipient of medal	482.3757	2013	

¹ In most cases, a plate is discontinued when it no longer meets the number of active required plates (1,000 [tier 1] or 3,000 [tier 2]). When discontinued, production of new plates is discontinued and the plate is no longer included in the 30-plate limit. In most instances, revenue continues to be received for renewal of previously issued plates until renewals are no longer authorized. A second date included in the “Year Discontinued” column reflects when renewal plates were discontinued.

² Prior to 2007, proceeds from the issuance of this plate were used for the support of veterans’ homes.

Plates Approved by the Legislature for Military, Public Service, or Certain Groups (Continued)			
<i>Group</i>	<i>NRS</i>	<i>Year Adopted</i>	<i>Year Discontinued³</i>
Person who achieved rank of Eagle Scout in Boy Scouts of America	482.3751	2015	
Person Awarded Girl Scout Gold Award by Girl Scouts of America	482.3752	2015	
Veteran of Armed Forces of United States awarded Silver Star or Bronze Star Medal with “V” device, Combat V, or Combat Distinguishing Device	482.3783	2015	
Vegas Golden Knights	482.3746	2017	

B. Special Plates Associated With Recognition of Our Support For Certain Charitable Causes

The first license plate intended to generate revenue for a specific cause or organization was authorized in 1989 when the 1989 Legislature approved [AB 878](#), which authorized the issuance of a special license plate to commemorate the 125th anniversary of Nevada’s admission into the Union. The issuance of this commemorative license plate ceased as of October 31, 1990, and the issuance of replacement commemorative license plates ceased as of June 30, 1995.



The 2013 Legislature passed [AB 24](#), which provided for the limited issuance of a new special license plate to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Nevada’s admission into the Union. The plate is known as the sesquicentennial plate. The issuance of this plate ceased on October 31, 2016.



³ In most cases, a plate is discontinued when it no longer meets the number of active required plates (1,000 [tier 1] or 3,000 [tier 2]). When discontinued, production of new plates is discontinued and the plate is no longer included in the 30-plate limit. In most instances, revenue continues to be received for renewal of previously issued plates until renewals are no longer authorized. A second date included in the “Year Discontinued” column reflects when renewal plates were discontinued.

The following table provides a list of plates associated with recognition of or support for certain charitable causes.

Plates Approved by the Legislature for Recognition of or Support for Certain Charitable Causes			
<i>Group</i>	<i>NRS</i>	<i>Year Adopted</i>	<i>Year Discontinued⁴</i>
Commemorating 125 th anniversary of Nevada's admission into the Union	482.379	1989	10/31/1990 6/30/1995
Support of education of children in arts	482.3792	1995	
Support of missing or exploited children	482.3793	1995	
Encouraging donation of human organs	482.37905	1997	
Lake Tahoe Basin preservation and restoration	482.37933	1997	
Support of agriculture	482.37917	1999	
Support of desert preserve established by Las Vegas Valley Water District	482.37919	1999	1/2/2014
Support of natural environment of Mount Charleston area	482.37935	1999	
Commemorating 100 th anniversary of founding of City of Las Vegas	482.37903	2001	
Appreciation of animals	482.379175	2001	
Support of preservation of history of atomic testing in Nevada	482.37918	2001	
Support of preservation of federal lands surrounding Las Vegas	482.37934	2001	1/2/2014
Support of preservation and restoration of natural environment of Lower Truckee River and Pyramid Lake	482.37937	2001	
Support of rodeos	482.37938	2001	
Support of reconstruction, maintenance, improvement, and promotion of Virginia & Truckee Railroad	482.37945	2001	
Support of conservation of wetlands – Nevada Ducks Unlimited	482.379185	2003	1/1/2007
Support of naturalized citizenship	482.379355	2003	
Reflect public solidarity after acts of terrorism committed on September 11, 2001	482.379365	2003	
Support and enhancement of parks, recreation facilities and programs in City of Reno	482.379375	2007	

⁴ In most cases, a plate is discontinued when it no longer meets the number of active required plates (1,000 [tier 1] or 3,000 [tier 2]). When discontinued, production of new plates is stopped and the plate is no longer included in the 30-plate limit. In most instances, revenue continues to be received for renewal of previously issued plates until renewals are no longer authorized. A second date included in the "Year Discontinued" column reflects when renewal plates were discontinued.

Plates Approved by the Legislature for Recognition of or Support for Certain Charitable Causes (Continued)			
<i>Group</i>	<i>NRS</i>	<i>Year Adopted</i>	<i>Year Discontinued⁵</i>
Commemorating 150 th anniversary of Nevada's admission into Union	482.37901	2013	10/31/2016
Support of Boy Scouts of America	482.37947	2015	
Support for rights guaranteed by Second Amendment to United States Constitution	482.37939	2015	
Support for Tule Springs State Park ⁶	482.37904	2017	

C. Special License Plates for Certain Classes and Types of Vehicles

There are also license plates associated with certain classes and types of vehicles. The statutes authorize the DMV to issue the plates under certain circumstances and these plates are not part of the 30-plate limit.

Plates Approved by the Legislature for Certain Classes and Types of Vehicles			
<i>Group</i>	<i>NRS</i>	<i>Year Adopted</i>	<i>Year Discontinued⁷</i>
Vehicle used for course of instruction in automobile repair	482.3823	1991	
Antique vehicle: "Horseless Carriage"	482.380	1963	
Antique vehicle: "Old Timer"	482.381	1973	
Street Rods	482.3812	1989	
Classic Rods	482.3814	1989	
Fire trucks	482.3795	1993	
Classic Vehicles	482.3816	1995	
Antique vehicle: Trucks and truck-tractors	482.3811	2001	
Vintage license plates	482.3818	2003	

D. Souvenir License Plate

A souvenir license plate ([NRS 482.3824](#)), which is substantially similar to the particular special license plate, may be produced by the DMV to generate financial support for a charitable organization.

⁵ In most cases, a plate is discontinued when it no longer meets the number of active required plates (1,000 [tier 1] or 3,000 [tier 2]). When discontinued, production of new plates is stopped and the plate is no longer included in the 30-plate limit. In most instances, revenue continues to be received for renewal of previously issued plates until renewals are no longer authorized. A second date included in the "Year Discontinued" column reflects when renewal plates were discontinued.

⁶ Effective two years after the Tule Springs State Park is established.

E. Special License Plates Recommended by the Commission for Fundraising

Following is a list of license plates approved by the Commission since 2004 to generate funds for an organization or cause.

Fundraising Plates Recommended by the Commission on Special License Plates Pursuant to NRS 482.367004			
<i>Group/Plate</i>	<i>Cause</i>	<i>Date Approved</i>	<i>Year Discontinued⁸</i>
Nevada Wildlife Record Book	Establish an interactive interpretive center and other wildlife projects.	January 2004	
Hot August Nights	Provide necessities and other gifts to children in need and scholarship programs.	July 2004	
Aviation	Fund for Aviation (NRS 494.048).	July 2004	1/1/2007
Reno Air Racing Association	Perpetuate the spirit of air racing and aviation through education and preservation.	July 2004	
Boulder City Chamber of Commerce	Boulder City tourism and general advertising.	October 2004	
Commission on Tourism	Highlight tourism in Nevada.	October 2004	1/1/2007
Nevada Library Association	Support summer reading programs in libraries.	October 2004	1/1/2007
Horse Power	A philanthropic program to financially aid groups, organizations, and individuals who care for wild, stray or second chance horses, burros, or mustang mules.	October 2006	12/31/2018 ⁹
Nevada Carpenters Union Local 1977	The Carpenters Local 1977 community supported fund at the Nevada Community Foundation.	October 2006	1/1/2009
Friends of Red Rock Canyon	Supports Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area in southern Nevada.	October 2006	

⁸ In most cases, a plate is discontinued when it no longer meets the number of active required plates (1,000 [tier 1] or 3,000 [tier 2]). When discontinued, production of new plates is stopped and the plate is no longer included in the 30-plate limit. In most instances, revenue continues to be received for renewal of previously issued plates until renewals are no longer authorized. A second date included in the “Year Discontinued” column reflects when renewal plates were discontinued.

⁹ This plate was not discontinued due to not meeting the active required plates. Instead, this plate was discontinued due to audit findings. For additional information, please see the [minutes](#) of the meeting of the Commission held on May 11, 2018.

Fundraising Plates Recommended by the Commission on Special License Plates Pursuant to NRS 482.367004 (Continued)			
<i>Group/Plate</i>	<i>Cause</i>	<i>Date Approved</i>	<i>Year Discontinued¹⁰</i>
Douglas County Sheriff's Search and Rescue	Supports search and rescue volunteers in Nevada.	October 2006	1/1/2009
University Medical Center Foundation, Inc. (supporting healthcare)	Supports the development of a new multi-organ transplant service in Nevada.	October 2010	1/2/2013
Nevada's Department of Wildlife (NDOW)	Supports NDOW Wildlife Education program.	October 2010	
United States Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron Thunderbirds	Supports the Nevada State Veterans Home.	May 2012	1/2/2014
March of Dimes	Supports health care programs for pregnant women and children in Nevada.	May 2012	1/1/2015
Teamsters Local 631	Supports the United Labor Agency of Nevada.	May 2012	1/1/2015
Susan G. Komen for the Cure and Nevada Health Centers, Inc.	Supports the Mammovan.	May 2012	
Nevada Airports Association	Funds directed to the Nevada Aviation Trust Fund.	May 2012	
Nevada Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board	Supports bicycle and pedestrian safety, planning and construction of facilities, grants, and safety outreach.	April 2014	1/1/2017
City of Reno ¹¹	Assists in ongoing park and recreation service maintenance and operation improvements.	April 2014	12/31/2017

¹⁰ In most cases, a plate is discontinued when it no longer meets the number of active required plates (1,000 [tier 1] or 3,000 [tier 2]). When discontinued, production of new plates is stopped and the plate is no longer included in the 30-plate limit. In most instances, revenue continues to be received for renewal of previously issued plates until renewals are no longer authorized. A second date included in the "Year Discontinued" column reflects when renewal plates were discontinued.

¹¹ This special license plate was originally authorized in 2007 with passage of [AB 297](#), but it was not recommended for approval by the Commission until 2014.

Fundraising Plates Recommended by the Commission on Special License Plates Pursuant to NRS 482.367004 (Continued)			
<i>Group/Plate</i>	<i>Cause</i>	<i>Date Approved</i>	<i>Year Discontinued¹²</i>
Nevada Bighorns Unlimited	Supports preservation and expansion of wildlife populations and their habitat.	October 2015	
The Great Reno Balloon Race	Supports the race and continuation of local partnerships with Washoe County School District and the Children's Cabinet.	October 2015	
Sparks Heritage Foundation and Museum	Supports the salary of the Executive Director of the Foundation and Museum.	October 2015	
Desert Conservation Program	Supports desert tortoise conservation projects only.	October 2015	
Keep Memory Alive/Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health	Supports patient family care, therapy services, and other necessary programs.	October 2015	
Women's Resource Medical Centers for Southern NV	Supports and enhances current programs.	October 2015	
Hidden Valley Wild Horse Protection Fund	Supports feeding, housing, providing veterinary services and transportation for horses, and public welfare and education.	October 2015	
Grant a Gift Autism Foundation	Supports autism research and treatment, as well as families who have children with autism.	January 2018	
Interfaith Council of Southern Nevada	Supports Interfaith forums, the annual Interfaith Thanksgiving service, Mayor Prayer Breakfast, and Camp Anytown	January 2018	
Henderson, Nevada Historical Society	Support certain Henderson programs; procure and archive artifacts, photos, and stories; hire a full-time executive director; and upgrade communications.	January 2018	

¹² In most cases, a plate is discontinued when it no longer meets the number of active required plates (1,000 [tier 1] or 3,000 [tier 2]). When discontinued, production of new plates is stopped and the plate is no longer included in the 30-plate limit. In most instances, revenue continues to be received for renewal of previously issued plates until renewals are no longer authorized. A second date included in the "Year Discontinued" column reflects when renewal plates were discontinued.

Fundraising Plates Recommended by the Commission on Special License Plates Pursuant to NRS 482.367004 (Continued)			
<i>Group/Plate</i>	<i>Cause</i>	<i>Date Approved</i>	<i>Year Discontinued¹³</i>
Northern Nevada Section of the Society for Mining, Metallurgy & Exploration Inc.	Endow a scholarship at the University of Nevada, Reno, benefitting undergraduate and graduate students in the Mackay School of Mines and the College of Science.	May 2018	
Raiders Foundation (The Oakland Raiders)	Funding will used for active military members and veterans, youth development, and growing the game of football.	May 2018	

¹³ In most cases, a plate is discontinued when it no longer meets the number of active required plates (1,000 [tier 1] or 3,000 [tier 2]). When discontinued, production of new plates is stopped and the plate is no longer included in the 30-plate limit. In most instances, revenue continues to be received for renewal of previously issued plates until renewals are no longer authorized. A second date included in the “Year Discontinued” column reflects when renewal plates were discontinued.