

MINUTES OF MEETING  
HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE  
MONTANA STATE SENATE

The meeting of the Highways and Transportation Committee was called to order at 1:00 p.m., February 5, 1987, by Chairman Larry Tveit, in Room 410 of the State Capitol.

ROLL CALL: All members of the Highways and Transportation Committee were present except Senator Meyer and Senator Williams who were absent.

CONSIDERATION ON SENATE BILL 194: Senator Hager, Senate District No. 48, sponsor of the bill, testified that Senate Bill 194 would change the numbers on state license plates to a two-letter county designation. The letters would be arranged in a vertical position on the license plates.

PROPOSERS: Mr. Jerome Kohn, Retired Insurance Agent, testified that the current numbering system on all license plates is around fifty years old and was based on the counties ranking by population at the time the system was devised. The figures are now out-of-date but if the license plates were changed to a two-letter designation, they would never have to be changed again. Mr. Kohn stated as new licenses are issued under the current system, the numbers will be increasingly higher and there will be no more room on the license plates. The two-letter designations would make it easier to determine what county a vehicle was from. The plan would be phased in beginning January 1, 1988, and any new or replacement plates issued after that date would have the two-letter designations. Exhibit 1.

OPPOSERS: There were none.

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE: Senator Lybeck, questioned Mr. Kohn as to the process of renewing the license plates and the use of stickers. The committee pointed out that there are personal license plates such as the National Guard and disabled veterans that have the two or three-letter plates already.

Mr. Larry Majerus, Montana Motor Vehicle Division, was asked how Department of Justice, Motor Vehicle Division felt about changing Montana's license plates. Mr. Majerus pointed out that other states already have two-letter plates and they stack their letters on the license plates. He stated there were some complaints about Montana's numbers. Mr. Majerus testified that the legislature has passed legislation for the department to reissue new plates for the centennial. The new system would have no significant impact on the cost of population or distributing plates. There would be a cost of about \$13,600.00 to produce the decals for personalized plates.

CLOSING: Senator Hager closed by saying that the only person, or persons, he could see that would object to this bill would be "politicians" for they like to put the list of county numbers on materials they hand out to the voters.

The hearing on Senate Bill 194 was closed.

CONSIDERATION ON SENATE BILL 212: Senator Farrell, Senate District No. 31, sponsor of the bill, testified that Senate Bill 212 would classify commercial vehicle operator's licensing. Senate Bill 212 would comply with the federal government licensing program passed in December 1986. The bill would require the state of Montana to have a classification endorsement on drivers licenses. If this bill does not pass, the federal government would hold all federal funding. Senator Farrell testified that one of the problems that is facing drivers of Montana is the fact that other states will not except Montana drivers licenses. In the last session, Senator Farrell introduced legislation to start a classification system, but the agricultural community were excluded, therefore, we have included the 16% gross vehicle weight fee.

Classification would be grandfathered in. Drivers would have to fill out forms certifying that they were trained as a truck driver. This program has been set up by the federal government to stop the mobile licenses. The program would allow driver license bureaus to set up the guidelines and make the rules to comply with the federal program.

PROPOSERS: Larry Majerus, Administrator, Montana Motor Vehicle Division testified that Congress passed the Commercial Vehicle Safety Act of 1986. This law requires a certain minimum disqualification for drivers, felonies, traffic and traffic violations. It specifies criminal, civil penalties for violation of licenses. It will be illegal for an operator to operate commercial licenses after July 1, 1987. (See Exhibit II)

Jim Manion, Executive Vice President, Montana Automobile Association testified about the trucking safety issues, hazardous business--especially for their highway users. (See Exhibit III)

Gene Pigeon, Montana Dakota Utilities Resources Group, testified that he supported Senate Bill 212 with the amendments that have been proposed by Gene Phillips, PPL NWTEL. (See Exhibit IV)

QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE: There were none.

CLOSING: We cannot delay in passing Senate Bill 212 for the federal government has passed the commercial motor vehicle safety act of 1986 which must be implemented by all the states by various dates in order to comply with the federal government

regulations and to receive federal funding.

CONSIDERATION ON SENATE BILL 179: Senator Beck, Senate District No. 24, sponsor of the bill, testified that Senate Bill 179 would eliminate the proration of motor vehicles fees with the exception of property taxes, light vehicle license fees, and fees in lieu of tax. Light vehicle license fees, or fees in lieu of tax due thereon shall be prorated and paid from the last day of the old period until the first day of the new period in which the vehicle shall be registered.

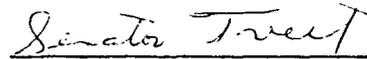
PROPONENTS: Larry Majerus, Motor Vehicle Division, testified that Senate Bill 179 allows the proration of property tax or light vehicle license fees in lieu of taxes. This would eliminate the proration of other fees--such as the junk vehicle fee, gross vehicle with fee or registration fee.

Susan Sprugeon, Montana County Treasurer's Association testified to prorate a 50 cent junk vehicle fee is time consuming and a nuisance. That the counties throughout the state of Montana support Senate Bill 179. (See Exhibit V))

OPPONENTS: There were none.

DISPOSITION OF SENATE BILL 179: A motion was made by Senate Lybeck that Senate Bill 179 DO PASS. It was seconded by Senator Abrams. The motion was carried unanimously.

A motion was made and seconded that the meeting be adjourned.

  
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Senator Tveit, Chairman



ROLL CALL

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

50th LEGISLATIVE SESSION -- 1987

Date 2/5/87

179 194

NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	EXCUSED
Chairman: Larry Tveit	✓		
Vice Chairman: Lawrence Stimatz	✓		
Senator Hubert J. Abrams	✓		
Senator William Farrell	✓		
Senator Tom Hager	✓		
Senator Sam Hofman	✓		
Senator Ray Lybeck	✓		
Senator Darryl Meyer			
Senator Cecil Weeding	✓		
Senator Bob Williams			

Each day attach to minutes.





The Big Sky Country

SENATE HIGHWAYS

EXHIBIT NO. I

DATE Feb. 5, 1987

BILL NO. 194

**MONTANA STATE SENATE**

SENATOR TOM HAGER  
SENATE DISTRICT 30

HELENA ADDRESS:  
P. O. BOX 44  
CAPITOL STATION  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620

HOME ADDRESS:  
150 NORRIS COURT  
BILLINGS, MONTANA 59105

**COMMITTEES:**

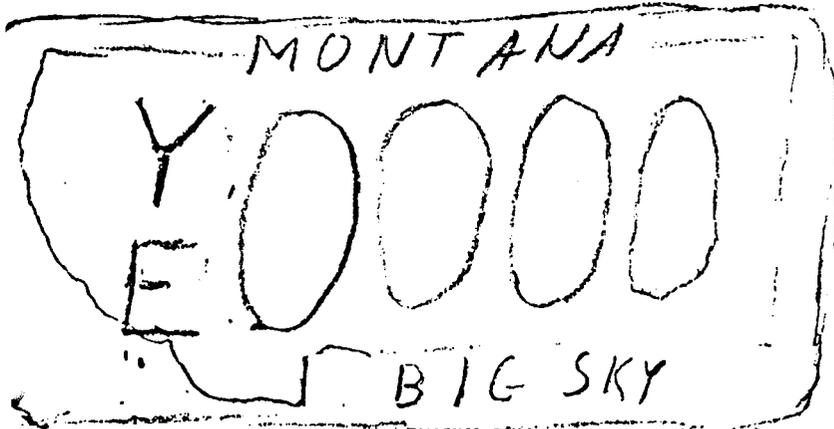
PUBLIC HEALTH, CHM.  
HIGHWAY & TRANSPORTATION, VICE CHM.  
TAXATION  
INTERIM WATER OVERSIGHT, CHM.

December 24, 1986

Legislative Council  
Capitol Station  
Helena, Montana 59601

Please consider this letter as a bill drafting request.

I want a bill written to call for new license plates to be issued in 1988. The license plate fee should cover the cost of the new plates (if it doesn't already.) The number-county designation will be dropped and a two letter designation will be used to designate the counties. See attached list. Below is a sketch showing the placement. On personalized plates a small sticker with the letter designation shall be used.



Yours very truly,

*Tom Hager*  
Tom Hager

County	Designation		County	Designation	
	Old	New		Old	New
Beaverhead	18	BV	McCone	41	MC
Big Horn	22	BH	Meagher	47	ME
Blaine	24	BL	Mineral	54	MN
Broadwater	43	BW	Missoula	4	MS
Carbon	10	CB	Musselshell	23	MU
Carter	42	CT	Park	49	PK
Cascade	2	CS	Petroleum	55	PE
Chouteau	19	CH	Phillips	11	PH
Custer	14	CU	Pondera	26	PO
Daniels	37	DN	Powder River	9	PD
Dawson	16	DW	Towell	28	PW
Deer Lodge	30	DL	Prairie	45	PR
Fallon	39	FA	Ravalli	13	RA
Fergus	8	FE	Richland	27	RI
Flathead	7	FL	Roosevelt	17	RO
Gallatin	6	GT	Rosebud	29	RB
Garfield	50	GF	Sanderg	35	SA
Glacier	38	GC	Sheridan	34	SH
Golden Valley	53	GV	Silver Bow	1	SB
Granite	46	GR	Stillwater	32	SW
Hill	12	HI	Sweet Grass	40	SG
Jefferson	51	JE	Teton	31	TE
Judith Basin	36	JB	Toole	21	TO
Lake	15	LA	Treasure	33	TR
Lewis & Clark	5	LC	Valley	20	VA
Liberty	48	LB	wheatland	44	WH
Lincoln	56	LN	Wibaux	52	WB
Madison	25	MA	Yellowstone	3	YE

## REMARKS CONCERNING SB 194

It is my feeling that there is a need to change our present system of licensing motor vehicles in Montana, and Mr. Hager has been kind enough to introduce a bill to substitute two-letter vertically arranged designations for the various counties instead of the numerical system we now employ.

### History of our present system:

Our present numerical system of county numbers is at least 50 years old, and presumably was set up based on the population of the various counties at that time, although there are sufficient inconsistencies in the numbering arrangement to make one wonder. For instance, Powder River County has number 9, whereas Park County has 49. (There is a story about how that happened, to the veracity of which I will not attest, although it came to me from my wife's grandfather, who was knowledgeable about such things, nor will I relate it to you except upon request.) There are a number of other illogical number assignments, but regardless, the fact is that county populations have changed materially in the past half-century, and it is probably an understatement to say that the system has outlived its usefulness.

### Inadequacy of present system:

For reasons of economy and probably other considerations, the Department of Motor Vehicles has long since abandoned the practice of issuing new plates each year. They have instead been using larger and larger numbers on the plates, until at the present in Yellowstone County the passenger car plates are up into the three hundred thousands and the truck plates are approaching one hundred thousand. If this practice is continued, our plates will soon be insufficiently wide to accommodate the number of digits needed, in fact, some counties have already run into that problem and had to start using letters instead of numbers. For instance, in a county like Wheatland, which is number 44, if the vehicle involved is a truck, the plate number starts out with a 44T, followed by a separator, there is then only room for four additional digits on the plate. When the number sequence got over 9999, it was necessary to substitute a letter for the first digit following the separation, giving us a plate number such as 44T-A138. Yellowstone County will soon be encountering the same problem in its truck licensing. While there is nothing wrong with the combining of letters and numbers in the plate, it does make it more difficult to remember and spot.

The system proposed by this bill would alleviate this problem to a great extent, because we would no longer have any counties with two-digit designations. All counties would have two-letter vertically arranged designations at the left-hand edge of the plate, which would provide space for one additional digit on the plates.

### Convenience of the suggested system:

With 56 counties in Montana, it is an infrequently achieved feat of memory to remember which numbers stand for which counties. Most people, I presume, can remember the numbers associated with the more populous

counties, and with the county numbers for counties close to their place of residence, but with the two-letter designations, the names of the counties would be much more evident, and as one drove around town or around the state, it would be no trick at all to quickly identify the home county of any particular vehicle almost at a glance. Identification of SB for Silver Bow, YE for Yellowstone, LC for Lewis & Clark, PR for Powder River, etc., should be readily self-evident. Abandoning the present system, which is based on county population, and going to one which is based on no particular criterion other than the name of the county, would institute a system which would never again need to be changed.

Cost to change:

Few will deny that it is time we had new plates for our cars and trucks; there has been no general replacement since the centennial year of 1976, and not only are we running out of space on the plates but a lot of the plates are showing a lot of wear and tear after eleven years of bumping and weather and bug exposure. It would, of course, be costly to issue new plates to all motorists in Montana, and these are no times to burden the state with such an expense, nor would it be fair to put the cost of such a replacement on the motoring public. Instead, this new system could be phased in by a process of attrition, in other words, as the Department of Motor Vehicles was called upon to issue new plates, either for newly-registered vehicles or as replacements for lost or damaged plates, they could issue new plates with the letter designations on them in lieu of the present numbers, and in a relatively short period of time most if not all Montanans would have the new variety of plates on their vehicles.

--JEROME M. KOHN  
Billings, Montana

DUPLICATE

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*Senate* BILL NO. 116

INTRODUCED BY Farnell

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN ENFORCEMENT OF THE GASOLINE LICENSE TAX COLLECTION LAWS; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 15-70-201, 15-70-202, 15-70-204, 15-70-205, AND 15-70-209, MCA."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 15-70-201, MCA, is amended to read:

"15-70-201. Definitions. As used in this part, unless the context requires otherwise, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Agricultural use" means use of gasoline by a person whose major endeavor and primary source of earned income is from the business of farming or ranching.

(2) "Aviation dealer" means any person in this state engaged in the business of selling aviation gasoline, either from a wholesale or retail outlet, on which the license tax has been paid to a licensed distributor as herein provided for.

(3) "Aviation gasoline" means gasoline or any other liquid fuel by whatsoever name such liquid fuel may be known or sold, compounded for use in and sold for use in aircraft, including but not limited to any and all such gasoline or

# STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

February 5, 1987

19.....

MR. PRESIDENT

We, your committee on Highways and Transportation

having had under consideration Senate Bill No. 116

first reading copy ( white )  
color

AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN ENFORCEMENT OF THE GASOLINE LICENSE TAX  
COLLECTION LAWS; AND AMENDING SECTIONS 15-70-201, 15-70-202,  
15-70-204, 15-70-205, AND 15-70-209, MCA."

Respectfully report as follows: That Senate Bill No. 116

DO PASS

~~DO NOT PASS~~

.....  
Chairman.

# STANDING COMMITTEE REPORT

February 5, 19 37

MR. PRESIDENT

We, your committee on HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

having had under consideration SENATE BILL No. 100

first reading copy ( white )  
color

## NEW CAR SALES TAX FOR TRAILERS

Respectfully report as follows: That SENATE BILL No. 100

be amended as follows:

1. Page 1, line 6

Following: "BY"

Strike: "INCLUDING"

Insert: "EXCLUDING"

2. Page 1, line ~~6~~ 15

Following: "vehicles,"

Strike: "including"

Insert: "excluding"

3. Page 4, line 14

Following: "vehicle."

Strike: ", trailer, semitrailer,"

Following: "bus."

Strike: "or"

4. Page 4, line 15

Following: line 14

Strike: "housetrailer"

AND AS AMENDED,

~~DO PASS~~

XXXXXXXXXX  
DO NOT PASS

SENATOR LARRY TVEIT,

Chairman.