

SB 194 INTRODUCED BY HAGER  
REPLACE NUMBERED COUNTY LICENSE PLATES WITH  
TWO-LETTER DESIGNATION

1/22	INTRODUCED	
1/22	REFERRED TO HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION	
1/23	FISCAL NOTE REQUESTED	
1/27	FISCAL NOTE RECEIVED	
2/05	HEARING	
2/17	COMMITTEE REPORT--BILL PASSED AS AMENDED	
2/19	2ND READING PASS MOTION FAILED	19 29
2/19	2ND READING INDEFINITELY POSTPONED	33 14

1 Senate BILL NO. 194  
 2 INTRODUCED BY Hager

3  
 4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT REQUIRING THE ISSUANCE  
 5 OF MOTOR VEHICLE LICENSE PLATES THAT REPLACE THE NUMBERED  
 6 COUNTY DESIGNATION WITH A TWO-LETTER COUNTY DESIGNATION;  
 7 AMENDING SECTIONS 2-89-302, 61-3-301, AND 61-3-332, MCA; AND  
 8 PROVIDING AN APPLICABILITY DATE."

9  
 10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

11 Section 1. Section 61-3-301, MCA, is amended to read:

12 "61-3-301. Registration -- license plate required --  
 13 display. (1) Except as otherwise provided herein, no person  
 14 shall operate a motor vehicle upon the public highways of  
 15 this state unless such vehicle is properly registered and  
 16 has the proper number plates conspicuously displayed, one on  
 17 the front and one on the rear of the vehicle, each securely  
 18 fastened to prevent it from swinging and unobstructed from  
 19 plain view, except that trailers, semitrailers,  
 20 quadricycles, and motorcycles shall have but one number  
 21 plate conspicuously displayed on the rear. No person shall  
 22 display on such vehicle at the same time any number assigned  
 23 to it under any motor vehicle law except as provided in this  
 24 chapter. A junk vehicle, as defined in part 5, chapter 10,  
 25 Title 75, being driven or towed to an auto wrecking

1 graveyard for disposal is exempt from the provisions of this  
 2 section.

3 (2) No person shall purchase or display on a vehicle  
 4 any license plate bearing the number letters assigned to any  
 5 county as provided in 61-3-332 other than the county of his  
 6 permanent residence at the time of application for  
 7 registration. However, the owner of any motor vehicle  
 8 requiring a license plate on any motor vehicle used in the  
 9 public transportation of persons or property may make  
 10 application therefor in any county through which the motor  
 11 vehicle passes in its regularly scheduled route, and the  
 12 license plate so issued bearing the number letters assigned  
 13 to said county may be displayed on the motor vehicle in any  
 14 other county of the state.

15 (3) It is unlawful to use license plates issued to one  
 16 vehicle on any other vehicle, trailer, or semitrailer unless  
 17 legally transferred as provided by statute, or to repaint  
 18 old license plates to resemble current license plates.

19 (4) Any person violating these provisions is guilty of  
 20 a misdemeanor and subject to the penalty set out in  
 21 61-3-601."

22 Section 2. Section 61-3-332, MCA, is amended to read:

23 "61-3-332. Number plates. (1) Every motor vehicle  
 24 which shall be driven upon the streets or highways of this  
 25 state shall display both front and rear a number plate,

1 bearing the distinctive number assigned such vehicle. Such  
 2 number plate shall be in eight series: one series for owners  
 3 of motorcars, one for owners of motor vehicles of the  
 4 motorcycle or quadricycle type, one for trailers, one for  
 5 trucks, one for dealers in vehicles of the motorcycle or  
 6 quadricycle type which shall bear the distinctive letters  
 7 "MCD" or the letters "MC" and the word "DEALER", one for  
 8 franchised dealers in new motorcars (including trucks and  
 9 trailers) or new and used motorcars (including trucks and  
 10 trailers) which shall bear the distinctive letter "D" or the  
 11 word "DEALER", one for dealers in used motorcars only  
 12 (including used trucks and trailers) which shall bear the  
 13 distinctive letters "UD" or the letter "U" and the word  
 14 "DEALER", and one for dealers in trailers and/or  
 15 semitrailers (new or used) which shall bear the distinctive  
 16 letters "DTR" or the letters "TR" and the word "DEALER". All  
 17 such markings for the aforementioned kinds of dealers'  
 18 plates shall be placed on the number plates assigned thereto  
 19 in such position thereon as the department may designate.

20 (2) All number plates for motor vehicles shall be  
 21 issued for a minimum period of 4 years, shall bear a  
 22 distinctive marking, and shall be furnished by the state.  
 23 In years when number plates are not issued, the department  
 24 shall provide nonremovable stickers bearing appropriate  
 25 registration numbers, which shall be affixed to the license

1 plates in use.

2 (3) In the case of motorcars and trucks, plates shall  
 3 be of metal 6 inches wide and 12 inches in length. The  
 4 outline of the state of Montana shall be used as a  
 5 distinctive border on such license plates, and the word  
 6 "Montana" with the year shall be placed across the plates.  
 7 Such registration plates shall be treated with a  
 8 reflectorized background material according to  
 9 specifications prescribed by the department.

10 (4) The distinctive registration numbers shall begin  
 11 with a number one or with a letter-number combination such  
 12 as "A 1" or "AA 1", or any other similar combination of  
 13 letters and numbers. The distinctive registration number or  
 14 letter-number combination assigned to the vehicle shall  
 15 appear on the plate preceded by the number letters of the  
 16 county and appearing in horizontal order on the same  
 17 horizontal baseline, and the two county number letters shall  
 18 ~~be separated from the distinctive registration number by a~~  
 19 ~~separation mark unless a letter number combination is used~~  
 20 appear in vertical order to the left of the registration  
 21 number. The dimensions of such numerals and letters shall be  
 22 determined by the department, ~~provided that all county and~~  
 23 ~~registration numbers shall be of equal height.~~

24 (5) For the use of tax-exempt motor vehicles that are  
 25 also exempt from the light vehicle license fee as provided

1 in subsection (2)(a) of 61-3-532, in addition to the  
2 markings herein provided, number plates shall have thereon  
3 the following distinctive markings:

4 (a) For vehicles owned by the state the department may  
5 designate the prefix number letter for the various state  
6 departments, and all numbered plates issued to state  
7 departments shall bear the words "State Owned" and no year  
8 number will be indicated thereon as these numbered plates  
9 will be of a permanent nature and will be replaced by the  
10 department at such time when the physical condition of  
11 numbered the plates requires same.

12 (b) For vehicles owned by the counties,  
13 municipalities, irrigation districts organized under the  
14 laws of Montana and not operating for profit, and school  
15 districts and used and operated by officials and employees  
16 thereof in line of duty as such, and for vehicles on loan  
17 from the United States government or the state of Montana,  
18 to, or owned by, the civil air patrol and used and operated  
19 by officials and employees thereof in the line of duty as  
20 such, there shall be placed on the number plates assigned  
21 thereto, in such position thereon as the department may  
22 designate, the letter "X" or the word "EXEMPT". Distinctive  
23 registration numbers letters for plates assigned to motor  
24 vehicles of each of the counties in the state and those of  
25 the municipalities and school districts situated within each

1 of said counties and those of the irrigation districts which  
2 obtain plates within each county shall ~~begin-with-number-one~~  
3 bear the county letter designation and be numbered  
4 consecutively.

5 (6) On all number plates assigned to motor vehicles of  
6 the truck and trailer type, other than tax-exempt trucks  
7 that are also exempt from the light vehicle license fee as  
8 provided in subsection (2)(a) of 61-3-532 and tax exempt  
9 trailers, there shall appear the letter "T" or the word  
10 "TRUCK" for plates assigned to trucks and the letters "TR"  
11 or the word "TRAILER" for plates assigned to trailers and  
12 housetrailleurs. The letters "MC" or the word "CYCLE" shall  
13 appear for plates assigned to vehicles of the motorcycle or  
14 quadricycle type.

15 (7) Number plates issued to a passenger car, truck,  
16 trailer, or vehicle of the motorcycle or quadricycle type  
17 may be transferred only to a replacement passenger car,  
18 truck, trailer, or motorcycle- or quadricycle-type vehicle.  
19 No registration or license fee may be assessed upon a  
20 transfer of a number plate under 61-3-317 and 61-3-335.

21 (8) For the purpose of this chapter, the several  
22 counties of the state shall be assigned numbers letters as  
23 follows: Silver Bow, ±SB; Cascade, 2CS; Yellowstone, 3YE;  
24 Missoula, 4MS; Lewis and Clark, 5LC; Gallatin, 6GT;  
25 Flathead, 7FL; Fergus, 8FE; Powder River, 9PD; Carbon, ±0CB;

1 Phillips, 11PH; Hill, 12HI; Ravalli, 13RA; Custer, 14CU;  
 2 Lake, 15LA; Dawson, 16DW; Roosevelt, 17RO; Beaverhead, 18BV;  
 3 Chouteau, 19CH; Valley, 20VA; Toole, 21TO; Big Horn, 22BH;  
 4 Musselshell, 23MU; Blaine, 24BL; Madison, 25MA; Pondera,  
 5 26PO; Richland, 27RI; Powell, 28PW; Rosebud, 29RB; Deer  
 6 Lodge, 30DL; Teton, 31TE; Stillwater, 32SW; Treasure, 33TR;  
 7 Sheridan, 34SH; Sanders, 35SA; Judith Basin, 36JB; Daniels,  
 8 37DN; Glacier, 38GC; Fallon, 39FA; Sweet Grass, 40SG;  
 9 McCone, 41MC; Carter, 42CT; Broadwater, 43BW; Wheatland,  
 10 44WH; Prairie, 45PR; Granite, 46GR; Meagher, 47ME; Liberty,  
 11 48LB; Park, 49PK; Garfield, 50GF; Jefferson, 51JE; Wibaux,  
 12 52WB; Golden Valley, 53CV; Mineral, 54MN; Petroleum, 55PE;  
 13 Lincoln, 56LN. Any new counties shall be assigned numbers  
 14 letters by the department as they may be formed, ~~beginning~~  
 15 ~~with the number 57.~~"

16 Section 3. Section 2-89-302, MCA, is amended to read:

17 "2-89-302. (Temporary) Commemorative centennial  
 18 license plates. (1) Notwithstanding the 4-year period  
 19 provided for in 61-3-332(2), the department of justice may  
 20 issue commemorative centennial license plates for a  
 21 different period if requested by the Montana statehood  
 22 centennial office, at prices to be agreed upon by the  
 23 department and the office as provided in 2-89-303.

24 (2) Commemorative license plates may be:

25 (a) collectors' license plates, intended to be

1 collectors' items only, distinctively marked or colored.  
 2 Such plates may be designated as not valid for the purpose  
 3 of licensing motor vehicles within the state; or

4 (b) special or limited duration license plates valid  
 5 for licensing motor vehicles in the state and carrying the  
 6 same general centennial design as regularly issued license  
 7 plates provided for in 2-89-301, except that they may differ  
 8 from such regular license plates by:

9 (i) color;

10 (ii) use of a distinctive series of registration  
 11 numbers or special prefixes or suffixes for the  
 12 registration numbers; and

13 (iii) by other details not distracting from legibility  
 14 or recognition of the license plate.

15 (3) (a) The proceeds from the sale of commemorative  
 16 license plates, after payment of the agreed price to the  
 17 department, must be used for centennial activities of the  
 18 office as provided in part 1 of this chapter.

19 (b) The issuance of commemorative license plates must  
 20 be made at no direct cost to the state.

21 (4) Commemorative license plates that are valid for  
 22 licensing a motor vehicle must carry the assigned county  
 23 number letters, as established in 61-3-332(8), either within  
 24 the registration numbers or by means of an affixed  
 25 nonremovable sticker bearing the appropriate county

LC 0757/01

1 designation and used in accordance with instructions by the  
2 department. (Terminates July 1, 1991--sec. 5, Ch. 674, L.  
3 1985.)"

4 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Applicability. This act  
5 applies to motor vehicle license plates issued on or after  
6 January 1, 1988.

-End-

STATE OF MONTANA - FISCAL NOTE

Form BD-15

In compliance with a written request, there is hereby submitted a Fiscal Note for SB194, as introduced.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION:

An act requiring the issuance of motor vehicle license plates that replace the numbered county designation with a two-lettered county designation.

ASSUMPTIONS:

1. It is assumed the intent of the bill is to phase in the letter change over a period of time.
2. 231,200 individual letter decals will be needed to replace numbers on current and future (1 year) personalized plates.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Expenditures:

FY88  
One-time cost

Special Revenue Fund  
Motor Vehicle Account

\$13,638

Revenues:

N/A

David L. Hunter DATE 1/27/87

DAVID L. HUNTER, BUDGET DIRECTOR  
Office of Budget and Program Planning

Tom Hager DATE 1-29-87

TOM HAGER, PRIMARY SPONSOR

Fiscal Note for SB194, as introduced.

**SB-194**

APPROVED BY COMMITTEE  
ON HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

1 SENATE BILL NO. 194  
2 INTRODUCED BY HAGER  
3  
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15 this state unless such vehicle is properly registered and  
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17 the front and one on the rear of the vehicle, each securely  
18 fastened to prevent it from swinging and unobstructed from  
19 plain view, except that trailers, semitrailers,  
20 quadricycles, and motorcycles shall have but one number  
21 plate conspicuously displayed on the rear. No person shall  
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23 to it under any motor vehicle law except as provided in this  
24 chapter. A junk vehicle, as defined in part 5, chapter 10,  
25 Title 75, being driven or towed to an auto wrecking

1 graveyard for disposal is exempt from the provisions of this  
2 section.

3 (2) No person shall purchase or display on a vehicle  
4 any license plate bearing the number letters assigned to any  
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6 permanent residence at the time of application for  
7 registration. However, the owner of any motor vehicle  
8 requiring a license plate on any motor vehicle used in the  
9 public transportation of persons or property may make  
10 application therefor in any county through which the motor  
11 vehicle passes in its regularly scheduled route, and the  
12 license plate so issued bearing the number letters assigned  
13 to said county may be displayed on the motor vehicle in any  
14 other county of the state.

15 (3) It is unlawful to use license plates issued to one  
16 vehicle on any other vehicle, trailer, or semitrailer unless  
17 legally transferred as provided by statute, or to repaint  
18 old license plates to resemble current license plates.

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20 a misdemeanor and subject to the penalty set out in  
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 4 motorcycle or quadricycle type, one for trailers, one for  
 5 trucks, one for dealers in vehicles of the motorcycle or  
 6 quadricycle type which shall bear the distinctive letters  
 7 "MCD" or the letters "MC" and the word "DEALER", one for  
 8 franchised dealers in new motorcars (including trucks and  
 9 trailers) or new and used motorcars (including trucks and  
 10 trailers) which shall bear the distinctive letter "D" or the  
 11 word "DEALER", one for dealers in used motorcars only  
 12 (including used trucks and trailers) which shall bear the  
 13 distinctive letters "UD" or the letter "U" and the word  
 14 "DEALER", and one for dealers in trailers and/or  
 15 semitrailers (new or used) which shall bear the distinctive  
 16 letters "DTR" or the letters "TR" and the word "DEALER". All  
 17 such markings for the aforementioned kinds of dealers'  
 18 plates shall be placed on the number plates assigned thereto  
 19 in such position thereon as the department may designate.

20 (2) All number plates for motor vehicles shall be  
 21 issued for a minimum period of 4 years, shall bear a  
 22 distinctive marking, and shall be furnished by the state.  
 23 In years when number plates are not issued, the department  
 24 shall provide nonremovable stickers bearing appropriate  
 25 registration numbers, which shall be affixed to the license

1 plates in use.

2 (3) In the case of motorcars and trucks, plates shall  
 3 be of metal 6 inches wide and 12 inches in length. The  
 4 outline of the state of Montana shall be used as a  
 5 distinctive border on such license plates, and the word  
 6 "Montana" with the year shall be placed across the plates.  
 7 Such registration plates shall be treated with a  
 8 reflectorized background material according to  
 9 specifications prescribed by the department.

10 (4) The distinctive registration numbers shall begin  
 11 with a number or or with a letter-number combination such  
 12 as "A 1" or "AA 1", or any other similar combination of  
 13 letters and numbers. The distinctive registration number or  
 14 letter-number combination assigned to the vehicle shall  
 15 appear on the plate preceded by the number letters of the  
 16 county and appearing in horizontal order on the same  
 17 horizontal baseline, and the two county number letters shall  
 18 ~~be separated from the distinctive registration number by a~~  
 19 ~~separation mark unless a letter-number combination is used~~  
 20 ~~appear in vertical order to the left of the registration~~  
 21 ~~number.~~ The dimensions of such numerals and letters shall be  
 22 determined by the department, ~~provided that all county and~~  
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24 (5) For the use of tax-exempt motor vehicles that are  
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8 number will be indicated thereon as these numbered plates  
9 will be of a permanent nature and will be replaced by the  
10 department at such time when the physical condition of  
11 numbered the plates requires same.

12 (b) For vehicles owned by the counties,  
13 municipalities, irrigation districts organized under the  
14 laws of Montana and not operating for profit, and school  
15 districts and used and operated by officials and employees  
16 thereof in line of duty as such, and for vehicles on loan  
17 from the United States government or the state of Montana,  
18 to, or owned by, the civil air patrol and used and operated  
19 by officials and employees thereof in the line of duty as  
20 such, there shall be placed on the number plates assigned  
21 thereto, in such position thereon as the department may  
22 designate, the letter "X" or the word "EXEMPT". Distinctive  
23 registration numbers letters for plates assigned to motor  
24 vehicles of each of the counties in the state and those of  
25 the municipalities and school districts situated within each

1 of said counties and those of the irrigation districts which  
2 obtain plates within each county shall ~~begin with number one~~  
3 bear the county letter designation and be numbered  
4 consecutively.

5 (6) On all number plates assigned to motor vehicles of  
6 the truck and trailer type, other than tax-exempt trucks  
7 that are also exempt from the light vehicle license fee as  
8 provided in subsection (2)(a) of 61-3-532 and tax exempt  
9 trailers, there shall appear the letter "T" or the word  
10 "TRUCK" for plates assigned to trucks and the letters "TR"  
11 or the word "TRAILER" for plates assigned to trailers and  
12 housetrailer. The letters "MC" or the word "CYCLE" shall  
13 appear for plates assigned to vehicles of the motorcycle or  
14 quadricycle type.

15 (7) Number plates issued to a passenger car, truck,  
16 trailer, or vehicle of the motorcycle or quadricycle type  
17 may be transferred only to a replacement passenger car,  
18 truck, trailer, or motorcycle- or quadricycle-type vehicle.  
19 No registration or license fee may be assessed upon a  
20 transfer of a number plate under 61-3-317 and 61-3-335.

21 (8) For the purpose of this chapter, the several  
22 counties of the state shall be assigned numbers letters as  
23 follows: Silver--Bow--ISB--Cascade, 2ES--Yellowstone--3YE--  
24 Missoula--4MS--Bewis--and--Clark--5BE--Gallatin--6GP--  
25 Flathead--7PB--Fergus--8PE--Powder River--9PB--Carbon--10EB--

1 Phillips, PH; Hill, HI; Ravalli, RA; Custer, CU;  
2 Lake, LA; Dawson, DW; Roosevelt, RV; Beaverhead, BV;  
3 Chouteau, CH; Valley, VA; Toole, TO; Big Horn, BH;  
4 Musselshell, MU; Blaine, BL; Madison, MA; Pondera,  
5 PO; Richland, RI; Powell, PW; Rosebud, RB; Deer  
6 Lodge, DL; Teton, TE; Stillwater, SW; Treasure, TR;  
7 Sheridan, SH; Sanders, SA; Judith Basin, JB; Daniels,  
8 DN; Glacier, GC; Fallon, FA; Sweet Grass, SG;  
9 McCone, MC; Carter, CT; Broadwater, BW; Wheatland,  
10 WA; Prairie, PR; Granite, GR; Meagher, ME; Liberty,  
11 LB; Park, PK; Garfield, GF; Jefferson, JE; Wibaux,  
12 WB; Golden Valley, GV; Mineral, MN; Petroleum, PE;  
13 Lincoln, LN; BEAVERHEAD, BV; BIG HORN, BH; BLAINE, BL;  
14 BROADWATER, BW; CARBON, CB; CARTER, CT; CASCADE, CS;  
15 CHOUTEAU, CH; CUSTER, CU; DANIELS, DN; DAWSON, DW; DEER  
16 LODGE, DL; FALLON, FA; FERGUS, FE; FLATHEAD, FL; GALLATIN,  
17 GT; GARFIELD, GD; GLACIER, GC; GOLDEN VALLEY, GV; GRANITE,  
18 GR; HILL, HI; JEFFERSON, JE; JUDITH BASIN, JB; LAKE, LA;  
19 LEWIS AND CLARK, LC; LIBERTY, LB; LINCOLN, LN; MADISON, MA;  
20 MCCONE, MC; MEAGHER, MR; MINERAL, MN; MISSOULA, MS;  
21 MUSSELSHELL, MU; PARK, PK; PETROLEUM, PE; PHILLIPS, PH;  
22 PONDERA, PO; POWDER RIVER, PD; POWELL, PW; PRAIRIE, PR;  
23 RAVALLI, RA; RICHLAND, RI; ROOSEVELT, RV; ROSEBUD, RB;  
24 SANDERS, SA; SHERIDAN, SH; SILVER BOW, SB; STILLWATER, SW;  
25 SWEET GRASS, SG; TETON, TE; TOOLE, TO; TREASURE, TR; VALLEY,

1 VA; WHEATLAND, WH; WIBAUX, WB; AND YELLOWSTONE, YE. Any new  
2 counties shall be assigned numbers letters by the department  
3 as they may be formed, beginning with the number 57."

4 Section 3. Section 2-89-302, MCA, is amended to read:  
5 "2-89-302. (Temporary) Commemorative centennial  
6 license plates. (1) Notwithstanding the 4-year period  
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15 Such plates may be designated as not valid for the purpose  
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17 (b) special or limited duration license plates valid  
18 for licensing motor vehicles in the state and carrying the  
19 same general centennial design as regularly issued license  
20 plates provided for in 2-89-301, except that they may differ  
21 from such regular license plates by:  
22 (i) color;  
23 (ii) use of a distinctive series of registration  
24 numbers or special prefixes or suffixes for the  
25 registration numbers; and

1 (iii) by other details not distracting from legibility  
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3 (3) (a) The proceeds from the sale of commemorative  
4 license plates, after payment of the agreed price to the  
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12 the registration numbers or by means of an affixed  
13 nonremovable sticker bearing the appropriate county  
14 designation and used in accordance with instructions by the  
15 department. (Terminates July 1, 1991--sec. 5, Ch. 674, L.  
16 1985.)"

17 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Applicability. This act  
18 applies to motor vehicle license plates issued on or after  
19 January 1, 1988.

-End-