

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD

TWO THOUSAND TWENTY-THREE

H.P. 1262 - L.D. 1965

An Act to Authorize the Secretary of State to Provide a New General Issue of License Plates

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:

Sec. 1. 29-A MRSA §451, sub-§1-A, as enacted by PL 1995, c. 645, Pt. C, §1 and affected by §16, is repealed and the following enacted in its place:

1-A. New general issue. The Secretary of State shall provide for a new general issue of registration plates and shall begin issuing the new plates no later than May 1, 2025. The Secretary of State shall complete the issuance of new plates before July 31, 2026 to all vehicles required to obtain new plates.

Sec. 2. 29-A MRSA §451, sub-§4, ¶A, as enacted by PL 1993, c. 683, Pt. A, §2 and affected by Pt. B, §5, is amended to read:

A. Registration plates must bear the year of issue or the last 2 numerals of that year and the word "Maine" ~~or the abbreviation "Me."~~ in letters of at least 3/4 inch in height centered at the top of the registration plate.

Sec. 3. 29-A MRSA §451, sub-§4-A, as enacted by PL 1997, c. 311, §1, is repealed and the following enacted in its place:

4-A. New general issue design. Notwithstanding subsection 4, the design of registration plates issued pursuant to subsection 1-A is governed by this subsection.

A. Registration plates must bear the year of issue or the last 2 numerals of that year and the word "Maine" in letters of at least 3/4 inch in height centered at the top of the registration plate.

B. Except on motorcycle plates, registration numbers may not be substantially less than 3 inches high.

C. On registration plates issued for private use and trucks, the word "Vacationland" must be centered at the bottom in letters not less than 3/4 inch in height, except when the Secretary of State determines that, for other than passenger vehicles, that space may be used for class codes.

D. A new registration plate must have a buff neutral shaded background that does not interfere with any identifying characteristics on the plate, a distinct border and:

- (1) Blue identification numbers and letters, a representation of an eastern white pine tree and a blue star representing the North Star on the side of the plate; or
- (2) Blue identification numbers and letters with no other features.

E. The Secretary of State shall devise, with the advice of the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over transportation matters, a numbering system suitable for a new general issue of registration plates.

Sec. 4. 29-A MRSA §451, sub-§6, as amended by PL 1995, c. 645, Pt. C, §3, is further amended to read:

6. Plates to be manufactured at State Prison Bolduc Correctional Facility. The Secretary of State or the duly designated official in charge of vehicle registration shall purchase and cause to be installed at the State Prison Bolduc Correctional Facility the necessary equipment and materials for the production of all vehicle registration plates used in the State. Only plates that ~~can not~~ cannot be produced at ~~the prison~~ Bolduc Correctional Facility and plates for which anticipated demand is below a minimum number determined by the Secretary of State may be purchased for state use.

The Warden of the State Prison has charge of operations at the State Prison Bolduc Correctional Facility relative to the manufacture of all plates made for the State. The Warden of the State Prison, with the consent of the Secretary of State, may employ for limited periods of time a supervisor for the purpose of instructing ~~inmates~~ residents in the operation of making such plates.

For purposes of this subsection, "resident" means an individual who resides in the Bolduc Correctional Facility.

Sec. 5. 29-A MRSA §461, sub-§1, as amended by PL 2019, c. 352, §1, is further amended to read:

1. Plate issue year. In a year in which new registration plates are issued, the Secretary of State shall reserve ~~until July 1st for one year~~ the same registration number for the succeeding registration year for a person who notifies in writing the Secretary of State prior to May 1st of that person's desire to retain that registration number. The fee for retention of the same registration number is \$25.

The Secretary of State may issue a facsimile plate that is valid for a 90-day period during production of a reserved plate. A facsimile plate must be attached to the rear plate bracket.

~~If a person does not have a vehicle to register on May 1st, a registration number may be held for a maximum of 2 registration years by depositing with the Secretary of State \$25 for each year. This fee is not refundable and may not be applied against the registration fee.~~

~~All numbers other than those reserved must be released and may be issued after July 1st 6 months after the plate issue is complete.~~

~~A person wishing to select a number out of rotation may do so by paying the registration fee and a reserved number fee of \$25.~~

Sec. 6. Report on new registration plates. The Secretary of State shall evaluate how frequently new registration plates should be issued. By January 15, 2024, the Secretary

of State shall report findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. The committee may report out a bill related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 131st Legislature.

Sec. 7. Funding. The Secretary of State shall implement the new general issue of registration plates under the Maine Revised Statutes, Title 29-A, section 451, subsection 1-A, including project contractor costs; technology and programming costs; plate material, production and manufacturing costs; and mailing costs, with up to \$7,000,000 in available prior year balances in the Personal Services and All Other line categories in the Department of the Secretary of State, Administration - Motor Vehicles program, Highway Fund account as authorized for this purpose in Public Law 2023, chapter 50, Part B. The funds may be allotted by financial order upon recommendation of the State Budget Officer and approval of the Governor.