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DRIVING FORCE

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SAVING FACE

States Move to Allow Single Rear License Plate



License to Chill

Single Plate Bills are Easy to Get Behind



Fans of cars and trucks—regardless of style or vintage—can appreciate the beauty of an absent front license tag.

Let's face it: license plates are a necessary evil. In the earliest days of motoring, law enforcement used them to uniquely identify the growing number of horseless carriages sharing the nation's roads. In 1903, Massachusetts became the first state in the United States to introduce government-produced registration tags. By the end of World War I, nearly every other state had its own program in place. Throughout their history, plates have come in a wide array of shapes, colors and styles. Various materials have also been used to create these tags, including leather, rubber, porcelain, iron and other metals. Today's standardized size (6 inches by 12 inches) for most passenger vehicles in North America was implemented in 1956.

Loyal readers will know that the SEMA Action Network (SAN) supports legislation that provides special license plates for a host of hobby cars, including street rods, customs and antiques. The SAN also actively promotes the use of "year of manufacture" plates on classics. However, no plate bills issued by the states receive greater enthusiasm from our forces than single plate proposals. After all, these measures requiring only a single rear-mounted tag are easy to get behind. A total of 19 states currently enjoy this privilege. These vehicle owners



This Porsche belongs to Virginia's Jeffrey Elmore, who recently wrote his lawmakers in support of the state's front plate proposal. In his message, he included the poignant slogan "Front tags ruin faces."

are spared the burden of having to create mounting holes on some original and fabricated bumpers. In fact, the original factory design of many motor vehicles were not equipped for the display of a front plate. A great number of older cars and several late models as well—including the recent Camaros, Mustangs, Corvettes, Teslas and certain imports—have been offered sans mounting brackets. Thus, the aesthetic contours of collector cars of all ages are preserved in these states.

As the 2015 legislative sessions ramp up, a series of single license plate bills have once again been introduced by legislatures nationwide, including in Iowa, Maryland, Nebraska, New York, Virginia, Washington and Wyoming. Much like in years past, this legislation is often an attempt by states to save money and conserve resources. Fortunately, several lawmakers that sponsor these bills, in states that do not yet allow the single plate, have contacted SAN staff asking for the group's support. They include Wyoming Representative and fellow gearhead Stan Blake, whom you can read more about in the "Caucus Connection" portion of this newsletter.

To further assist interested car enthusiasts, the SAN recently developed a compilation of the specialty license plates available by state. Designed to be a quick reference guide, this resource includes a map that illustrates the number of license plates required. This material can be accessed at this link: semaSAN.com/LicensePlates.

Ultimately, a concerted effort must be made by SAN members statewide for these single-plate bills to have a chance of being enacted into law. As you may have guessed, law enforcement agencies aggressively fight these bills based on the claim that front plates allow officers to quickly identify vehicles involved in violations of the law. For that reason, these proposals rarely emerge from the Legislature. However, by working together with local law enforcement officials, attending hearings and sharing the responsibility in finding mutual solutions, we have the opportunity to impact the future of these laws.

Image Courtesy Shutterstock.com

Wyoming Representative Stan Blake Is on the Right Track

Wyoming Representative Stan Blake is lawmaker who understands the pure passion of the automotive enthusiast. Now serving his fifth term in the Wyoming State Legislature, Blake is the proud owner of a '49 Willys Jeepster, '46 Ford truck, '68 Oldsmobile Toronado and '74 International Scout II. He's also an original member of the SEMA-supported State Automotive Enthusiast Leadership Caucus and a regular attendee at the association's annual gathering in Las Vegas, the SEMA Show. Oh yeah, his real job...well, he's a railroad conductor with Union Pacific.

His journey into politics began with a failed run for the Hospital Board in Green River, Wyoming. Not deterred, he then ran for the position of legislative representative for his union, the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers. After winning that election, he became aware that the seat representing House District 39 was going to be vacated. After careful consideration, he threw his hat into the ring. "The main attraction to run

was I wanted to try and make a difference in the lives of my constituents and to become a voice for the working people in my area," Representative Blake says.

He's also quickly become a reliable ally for the automotive hobbyist community. In 2009, when SEMA's model Street Rod and Custom Vehicle titling and registration bill was introduced and enacted into law in Wyoming, Blake joined with other car crazy legislators and signed on as a co-sponsor. This year, he introduced a bill to provide for the issuance of a single license plate for motor vehicles that were not originally equipped with a display bracket on the front of the vehicle.

"The SEMA Show is a great opportunity for me to meet and collaborate with other legislators," Blake explained. "It was through



Now undergoing restoration, the '74 International Scout II shown below proudly belongs to Wyoming Representative Stan Blake.

these connections that I've been able to gather information on laws and regulations being discussed in other states. Most of my legislation to benefit car enthusiasts was born at the SEMA Show." He also uses the Show to scope out his favorite rides, among these are the '65 Buick Riviera and the '65 Pontiac GTO.

"Car enthusiasts need to be involved with legislators in their state to help protect the hobby. If there is a bill that you oppose or support, your

voice needs to be heard. Legislators respond to people who contact and engage them. If your voice is not heard, then they have no idea of your position. Get to know your legislators through public forums and political rallies. Just know that you can make a difference."



STATE UPDATE

Pro-Hobby Bills on the Move

With the new legislative sessions underway, here are a few positive proposals being supported by the SEMA Action Network (SAN):

Iowa Nitrous Oxide:

The SAN is supporting legislation to permit motor vehicles equipped with nitrous-oxide systems. Under the bill, the system must be disconnected when operating the vehicle on public highways. The bill allows for the installation of nitrous-oxide systems as long as the feed lines are disconnected or the canisters are removed while the vehicle is being operated on a public road.



Oregon Ethanol:

The SAN is supporting legislation to remove the requirement that all gasoline offered for sale in the state contain a percentage of ethanol. Currently, the state requires that “a retail dealer, nonretail dealer or wholesale dealer may not sell or offer for sale gasoline unless the gasoline contains 10% ethanol by volume.”



Vermont Title Issuance: The SAN is supporting legislation that would ease the burden on hobbyists by requiring the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, upon the owner’s request, to issue titles for vehicles not currently required to be titled under Vermont law. These vehicles would include those 15 years old and older. The bill authorizes the state to pass along to the vehicle owner reasonable costs (up to \$100) for staff time incurred in investigating and fulfilling a title request.

SAN DIRECTOR’S DISPATCH



Colby Martin

State Houses Heat Up

2015 is here and with the new year come new legislative sessions and new proposals. Automotive bills are quickly mounting in number from state houses nationwide. Let’s check out the lay of the land together!

The notion that multiple states are considering a move to a single, rear-mounted plate requirement is incredibly inspiring. As you’ll read in the cover story of this issue, there have been a slew of legislatures proposing such a shift. Like most gearheads, I’m a huge fan of these bills. After all, my own ’58 Ford F-100 pickup’s smooth front bumper was produced without a front mounting bracket, resulting in a much cleaner design. As always, it will take a mass of encouragement from our community to propel these bills into law.

As *Driving Force* readers will recognize, emissions and exhaust systems continue to be debated among the states. On the positive side, Pennsylvania is seeking to extend the new-car emissions-inspection exemption for five years after the model year. A new Virginia bill would remedy the enforcement policy currently used by police officers in which nearly all exhaust systems on antique vehicles not of a type installed as standard factory equipment are considered illegal. West Virginia is proposing to remove subjective provisions in the law and force compliance with an objectively measured standard. However, the state is also threatening to make it a criminal offense to “disturb the peace” using certain exhaust systems without including a similar standard. Similarly, the SEMA Action Network (SAN) is opposing legislation in Hawaii that would prohibit the use, sale or installation of an exhaust system “that has been changed or modified from the factory design so as to increase the volume or audibility of the explosions within the vehicle’s motor.”

Revenue collection is also a hot topic that includes both pro- and anti-hobby legislation. Two Minnesota bills are seeking to penalize national efforts to create a more fuel efficient vehicle fleet by taxing drivers based on actual miles traveled. Oregon, which already has a voluntary vehicle miles traveled tax in place is now looking to convert its current program to a mandatory one. Fear not, for there is also good news. Hawaii has proposed to reduce annual registration fees and the state vehicle weight tax. Under a new bill, vehicle registrations in Virginia would become permanent unless the vehicle ownership or the address where the vehicle is principally garaged changes. And in New Hampshire, the definition of eligible Antique Motor Vehicles could be expanded to include trucks more than 25 years old (regardless of weight). This bill provides the option for older trucks to take advantage of the many accommodations available to antique motor vehicles.

For up-to-date news on each of these topics, visit semaSAN.com/Alerts and to be prepared for upcoming battles in your state. Please ask your friends and car club members to get involved with our growing force. They can sign up to stay informed free of charge at semaSAN.com/Join. As you know, they will receive legislative updates as they happen in their jurisdiction by being a fellow SAN member—no cost, SPAM or “catch.” After all, great strength comes with great numbers. —IGNITED WE STAND!



The stock front bumper of my own '58 Ford F-100 pickup, shown here on the Bonneville Salt Flats in 2002, was not designed to accommodate any registration plate—just the way I like it!

Tanks, Trails and Treads

Much like the state legislatures, the offices of federal lawmakers are in similar flurries of activity. Fortunately, congressional measures impacting ethanol fuel, tire-pressure monitoring systems and public lands are in the works—each benefiting car enthusiasts. Thus, the following efforts are currently being supported by the SEMA Action Network (SAN):



E15 Ethanol: The SAN is working to enact legislation that would cap the amount of ethanol blended into gasoline at 10% and eliminate the Renewable Fuel Standard's (RFS) corn-based ethanol requirement. The "Renewable Fuel Standard Reform Act" would protect consumers by repealing the EPA regulation that permitted fuel to be blended with ethanol at up to 15%. The bill would also eliminate a

RFS mandate that 15 billion gallons of corn-based ethanol be blended into the U.S. fuel supply on an annual basis each year from 2015 through 2022. While the RFS was designed to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil, it did not take into consideration the fact that ethanol can cause metal corrosion and dissolve certain plastics and rubbers, especially in older cars that were not constructed with ethanol-resistant materials. The SAN has joined with more than 50 other organizations from the auto/boat industries to the food, energy and environmental community to support passage of the legislation.

National Monuments: The U.S. Congress is soon expected to take up SAN-supported legislation to ensure public participation when a "National Monument" is established. Under current law, the President has the authority to declare public land with "historic or scientific interest" to be a National Monument. While this designation does not immediately close any roads, it prohibits new roads or trails for motorized vehicles and will require drafting of a new land management plan. President Obama is under pressure to establish several monuments, including a 1.4 million acres

"Greater Canyonlands National Monument" in Utah leading to the closure of 1,050 miles of off-road trails. The SAN-supported bill would require the President to complete an environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before designating more than 5,000 acres as a national monument. This would ensure public involvement and consideration of the economic impact on local communities from such a designation.

TPMS Study: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is going to conduct a public survey on the effectiveness of tire-pressure monitoring systems (TPMS). The equipment is intended to warn drivers of significant underinflation of tires. The systems became standard equipment on all light-duty vehicles as of 2007. A 2011 study found that TPMS was generally 56% effective in preventing severe underinflation but less effective in older vehicles. In the current survey, the NHTSA will focus on consumer knowledge and awareness of these systems and also seek to identify the causes of any TPMS malfunctions and costs to repair.

For the complete list of Legislative Action Alerts, visit semaSAN.com/Alerts.



WEB RESERVES

Ground Zero for Ground Clearance

The SEMA Action Network (SAN) is proud to announce the latest addition in its series of online resources. For the benefit of SAN hobbyists, the SEMA Government Affairs office has compiled all of the state laws impacting altered-height vehicles. The laws include those addressing maximum allowable bumper and frame heights, headlamp and taillamp heights, tire and wheel sizes and other equipment restrictions. That's right, after years of looking for a definitive answer to your state's laws on lift limitations, your search is finally over. Here is a direct link to this new resource: semaSAN.com/AlteredHeight.

Make sure to share this new resource with anyone thinking about lifting their vehicle to ensure the finished job is done within the legal confines. And hopefully it will help guide you during your next project build as well.

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