

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES

The meeting was called to order by Sen. Bill Morris at  
Chairperson

9:00 a.m. ~~pm~~ on February 5, 1986 in room 254-E of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Sen. Vidricksen  
Sen. Doyen and Sen. Francisco were excused.

Committee staff present:  
Fred Carman, Revisor  
Hank Avila, Legislative Research Department  
Louise Cunningham, Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Col. Bert Cantwell, Kansas Highway Patrol  
Bob Clester, Kansas Sheriffs' Association  
Kay Houser, Neighborhood Watch Association  
Director Tom Kelly, KBI  
Frances Kastner, Food Dealers' Association  
Richard Schlegel, A.B.A.T.E.  
Harley Duncan, Department of Revenue  
Doris Larsen, Lincoln Co., County Treasurers' Association  
Joe Childs, Center Industries, Wichita

On a motion from Sen. Thiessen and a second from Sen. Martin the Minutes of February 4, 1986 were approved. Motion carried.

HEARING ON S.B. 438 - Requiring two license plates.

Col. Cantwell, Kansas Highway Patrol, told the committee that having two license plates would be very beneficial to patrol officers from a safety standpoint and would afford more ready identification for officers and the general public. It would also eliminate dangerous turnarounds. A copy of his statement in support of S.B. 438 dated February 5, 1986 is attached. (Att. 1).

Bob Clester, Kansas Sheriffs' Association, said there had been a meeting last year of five various law enforcement groups and they considered S.B. 438. Each association voted to support this bill. They feel they need this bill for the safety of the officers. They also depend on citizens to serve as witnesses and it would be helpful to have two plates. Mr. Clester submitted information to the committee entitled "Front Plates Work" and information on states having two plates. A copy of this material is attached. (Att. 2).

The Chairman had received a letter from Governor Carlin dated February 5, 1986 in support of S.B. 438. A copy of this letter is attached. (Att. 3).

Kay Houser said she is a member of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Crime Prevention. This is a group of people throughout the state that includes ordinary people along with law enforcement officers and judges. It was their unanimous decision to support two license plates. They have been very active in the Neighborhood Watch Program and as their Chairman, she was speaking for them in support of S.B. 438.

Tom Kelly, KBI Director, said this bill was very important in the surveillance of illegal activity pertaining to drugs. They depend a great deal on the identification of automobiles and they have to observe them from great distances. Many times the criminals will use identical automobiles and the only identification is the tag. Many times a plate will be covered with mud. They utilize cameras and binoculars in their surveillance and a front plate would be an advantage to law enforcement.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES,  
room 254-E, Statehouse, at 9:00 a.m./p.m. on February 5, 1986

Frances Kastner, Food Dealers' Association, said many of their members have convenience stores and many times people leave without paying for their gasoline. She said many of the customers object to paying for it before they pump it. It would be very beneficial to be able to view the license tag from either the front or the back. Her statement in support of S.B. 438 is attached. (Att. 4).

Richard Schlegel, A.B.A.T.E., said he was appearing before the committee to ask for an amendment for the motorcyclists. He asked that on page 3, line 95, the number 5 be changed to 6 letters or numbers for the personalized tags on motorcycle license plates.

Doris Larsen, County Treasurers' Association, said she was concerned about the cost of mailing two tags. She said about one-third of the people mailing in for their tags had to have their applications returned to them for some reason such as forgetting to sign, incorrect insurance information or some other reason. This is costly. A copy of her statement is attached. (Att. 5). She also submitted a proposed amendment raising the fee to \$1.00. A copy of the amendment is attached. (Att. 6). The Chairman noted that this amendment would raise the fee for all plates and not just for the tags that are mailed.

Joe Childs, Center Industries, was asked about the additional costs or problems that would be encountered if this bill was passed. Mr. Childs said Center Industries employ the physically handicapped and they would have to employ more. They have more people wanting employment and they have the capacity to make the two tags. They presently have 112 employees. There would be no problems.

Harley Duncan, Secretary, Department of Revenue said there would be no net drain on the highway fund with this bill and as far as he could tell there would be no production problem.

Col. Cantwell told the committee that if this bill passed the law enforcement agency would enforce it and make sure all vehicles had the two tags.

The committee discussed the bill which passed last year dealing with the county treasurers and the Chairman said staff would brief the committee on that legislation and review it.

FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF S.B. 429 - Handicapped Parking

Fred Carman had prepared a committee report on S.B. 429 (CRS429ml), (Att. 7) incorporating the changes that had been discussed at the previous meeting. He said cities would be permitted to set their own fines rather than to force it through the state courts. It would provide for up to a \$25 fine plus court costs.

A motion was made by Sen. Walker and was seconded by Sen. Martin to adopt the committee report and recommend S.B. 429 as amended, be passed. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

SENATE TRANSPORTATION AND UTILITIES COMMITTEE

Date 2-5-86 Place 254-E Time 9:00

GUEST LIST

NAME

ADDRESS

ORGANIZATION

Ray Hauser	5026 W 2nd Plk	Gov Comm
Thomas E. Kelly	Topeka	KBI
Bob Clester	Topeka	Ks. Sheriff's Ass'n
Darb Patton	Wichita	SM
Frances Kastner	Topeka	Ks Food Dealers Assn
Bob Duda	WICHITA	CENTOR INDUSTRIES
Art Subut	Lawrence	University Daily Kansan
PAT BARNES	TOPEKA	Ks. MOTOR CAR DEALERS ASSN.
Wally McBride	Columbus	Cherokee Co. Treasurer
Richard D. Schlegel	Manhattan	ABATE
H. Duncan	Topeka	KS Dept of Revenue
Doris Garrison	Lincoln	Ks Co Press Assn
Mary Ladouce	Wyandotte	County Treasurer
Ken E. O'Brien	Johnson	County Treasurer
Larry Thomas	Lawrence	REV.
Harry Jones III	Smith Co.	KCTA Pres
Lt. Bill JACOBS	TOPEKA	KANSAS HIGHWAY PATROL
B. Koch	Wichita	KARE-TV
Ed Desjardis	Topeka	KDOT
John Pelton	"	K.C. Times
Jessan Duffly	Topeka	Budget
Harold B. Terwilliger	"	Dept of Rev

C

SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY

Before the Senate Transportation and Utilities Committee

SENATE BILL 438

Presented by the Kansas Highway Patrol  
(Colonel Bert Cantwell)

February 5, 1986

The Patrol strongly supports Senate Bill 438.

As a law enforcement agency we have a vested interest both from a practical and safety standpoint.

Considering the primary purpose of license plates, to afford identification of the vehicle and registered owner and to assure compliance with the registration laws, our mission would be greatly enhanced through a two-plate application.

It is generally recognized that a patrol officer will have the opportunity to read three front plates, when available, to every rear plate. Obviously, the proposed application would afford more ready identification of traffic units both for officers and the cooperating public.

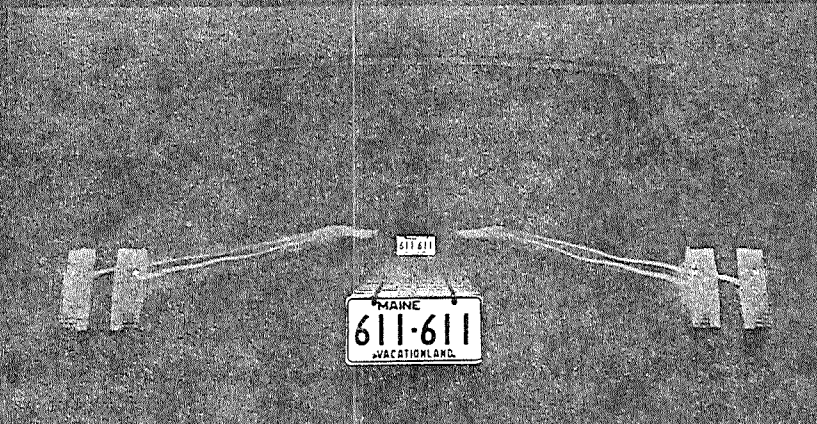
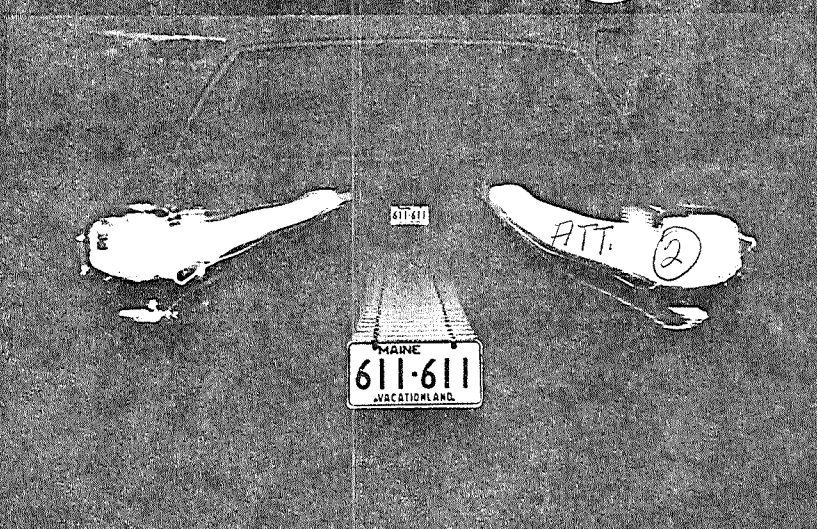
Our major concern in this regard is officer safety. With the ability to read a front plate an officer can effect identification and have the opportunity for radio contact with a base point or other officers, as well as, prepare themself mentally and physically prior to stopping the vehicle, particularly on felony or high risk stops. Conversely, when the officer must pull behind the vehicle to effect the identification, time becomes a critical factor in preparing for the stop which may well be immediate.

Additionally, this ability would eliminate the need for many dangerous turn-arounds on busy highways to identify a vehicle where only a rear plate is available and identification rests on that factor alone.

The legislature, in recent years, has greatly assisted our efforts through adoption of the reflectorized license plate and the SAM-123 numbering system which will take effect in 1988. We again request your support in further improving the system through favorable consideration of this bill.

ATT. ①  
S.T.U 2/5/86

**One inexpensive  
law enforcement device  
can foil a thief  
coming...**



**and going.**

Attachment 2  
S.T.U 2/5/86

# Front plates work.

There are over 137 million vehicles in the United States. Cars are part of the American way of life.

They're part of American crime too.

One inexpensive law enforcement tool makes crime involving a car a little more difficult. It's the front plate. The front plate makes it easier to identify a car and increases the chances that a criminal will be caught and brought to justice.

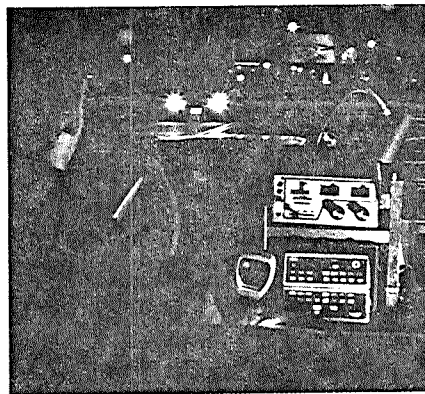
## Anyone can use it.

The front plate is probably the only law enforcement tool that police and private citizens can both use safely. Anyone—a clerk in a store or a kid on a bike—can write down the license number and turn it over to police.



## Police use it.

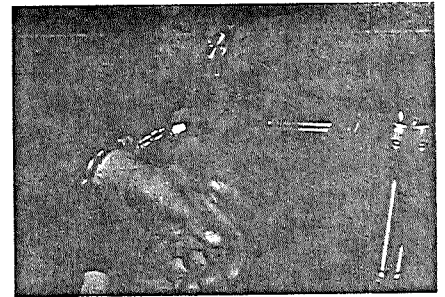
As they move through traffic, police rely heavily on the front plates of oncoming cars.



Police academies train officers to read oncoming plates quickly. There are simply more front plates for the officer to scan because few people will overtake and pass a squad car as it moves through traffic.

## Proven crime fighter.

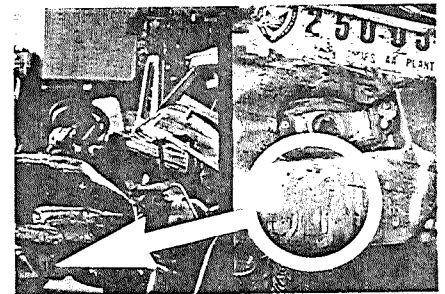
An officer answering an emergency call in rural Maine took the number from the front plate of the only car he encountered on the way to the address. When he arrived, he found a murder and put an all points bulletin for the car he had seen.



Later police had a suspect in custody—a suspect who later confessed to the murder.

## Accident reconstruction.

In most accidents, a front plate is usually at or near the point of impact. Often it leaves a visible impression on the struck object and that impression can be measured. It is a real clue that can help determine the precise point of impact.

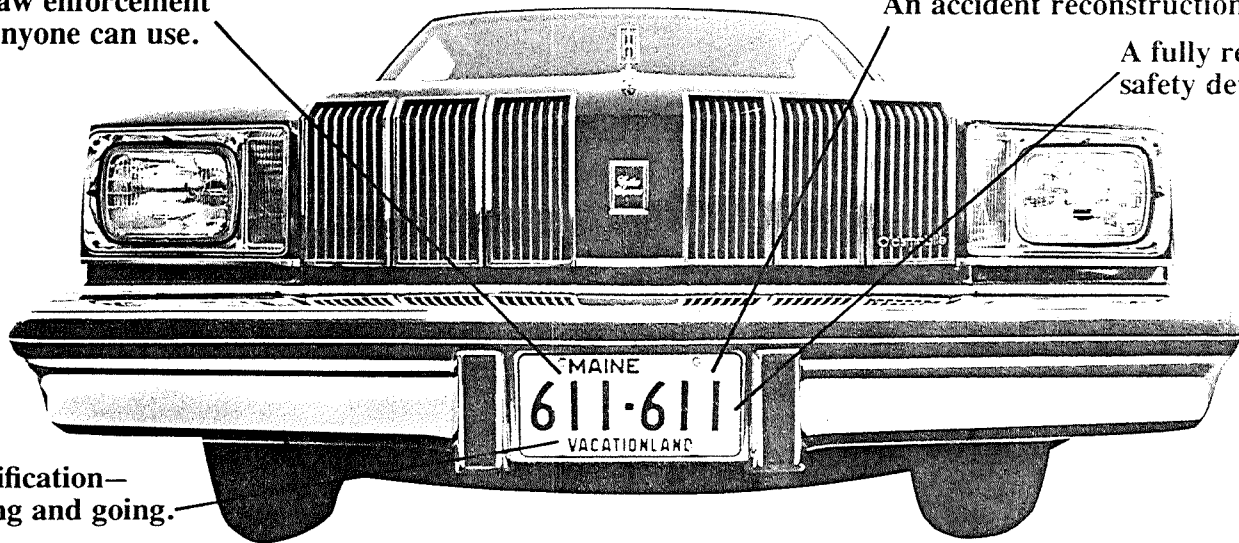


ATT. ②

**T** law enforcement tool anyone can use.

An accident reconstruction tool

A fully reflective safety device.



Identification—coming and going.

Or, in hit-and-run situations, the plate may remain at the scene as part of the damage after the car and its driver have departed.

## Simple and efficient.

As law enforcement agencies across the nation follow the trend to one officer patrol cars, a simple and efficient tool like the front plate becomes even more important.

Of more than 3.8 million miles of roadway in this country, less than 5% is fourlane divided highway. The balance, more than 3 million miles, is made up of roads, streets, and highways where oncoming car situations are common—where the front plate helps the lone officer patrol efficiently and effectively.

The front plate helps. Even in the routine job of checking the hotsheet for stolen vehicles, one officer can check both sides of the street in one pass.

## Law enforcement organizations want the front plate.

Organizations like the International Conference of Police Associations, The International Chiefs of Police, and the National

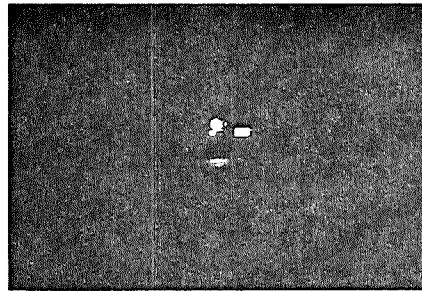
Sheriff's Association—organizations representing more than 400,000 law enforcement officers, have written and continue to write letters and petitions in favor of the front license plate.

They know it is a safe, effective, law enforcement tool.

## Safety tool, too.

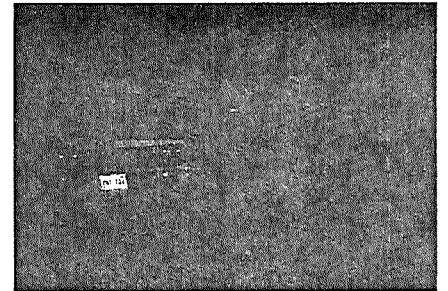
A fully reflective front plate can do something more. It can help you position a car on a dark stretch of highway.

Is this a car with a headlight out? A motorcycle?



Americans bought nearly 32 million replacement sealed beam headlamps in 1975. That's roughly one for every five cars on the road. Headlight or not, the reflective plate tells you it's a car out there. It positions that car on the road for you.

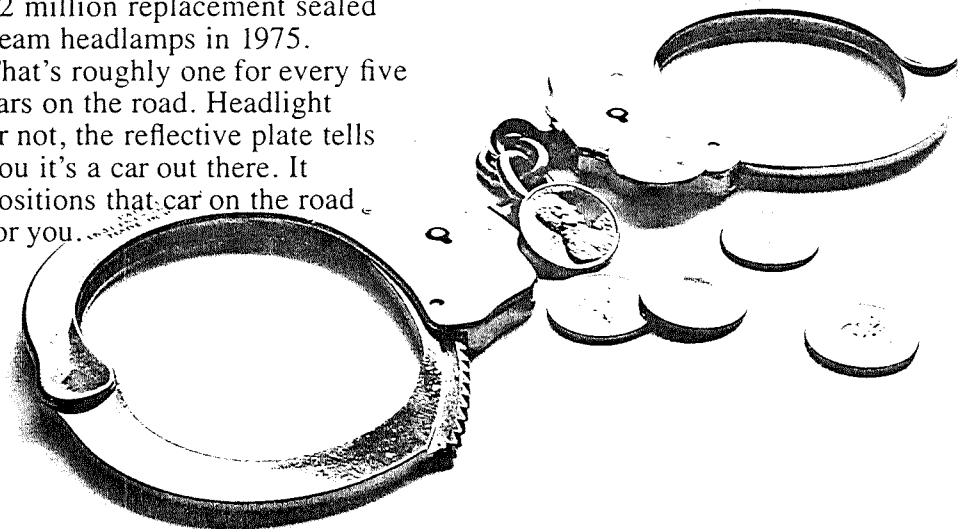
That reflective front plate on your car shows up like this when it's parked on a dark street:



That crime-fighting, accident preventing law enforcement tool costs just 15 cents a year.

Fifteen cents. For less than the price of a cup of coffee, you can buy one of the most effective law enforcement and safety devices ever made.

That front plate belongs out there on the job 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. And at fifteen cents a year, we can't afford to be without it.



STATE OF KANSAS



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
State Capitol  
Topeka 66612-1590

John Carlin Governor

February 5, 1986

The Honorable Bill Morris, Chairperson  
Committee on Transportation and Utilities  
Senate Chamber  
Third Floor, Statehouse

Dear *Bill* Senator Morris:

With the planned reissue of motor vehicle license plates in 1988, it is appropriate at this time to consider requiring the use of both front and rear license plates on certain vehicles. The new design that consists of a combination of three letters followed by a combination of three numerals provides easier and faster recognition and identification for law enforcement officers.

In addition, reflectorized license plates on the front and rear of vehicles assist single officer patrols at night in identifying on-coming vehicles. The reflectorized plates also serve to alert motorists at night to parked vehicles along the roadside.

I support the passage of SB 438 which requires both front and rear reflectorized license plates.

Sincerely,  
*John Carlin*  
JOHN CARLIN  
Governor

JC:meo

Atch. 3  
S. T. J. U 2/5/86





THE STATE OF KANSAS

# The Governor's Legislative Message

PRESENTED TO  
THE 1986 LEGISLATURE

  
JOHN CARLIN, GOVERNOR

Attachment 3

S. T+U

2/5/86

ties and prohibit certain practices regarding the sale of alcoholic liquor and cereal malt beverages.

-- In the fall of 1985, I established and appointed the Kansas Liquor Law Review Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of our alcoholic beverage control laws and procedures. The report of this commission will be available for consideration by the 1987 Legislature.

The progress made during my administration in dealing with this most significant problem in public safety has been a major step forward. It is my hope that we can continue to work cooperatively with local governmental units and private sector interest groups to implement effectively a comprehensive plan that reduces alcohol-related offenses.

### TRAFFIC SAFETY

In 1984, the legislature adopted a change in the design of motor vehicle license plates that consisted of a combination of three letters followed by a combination of three numbers. This design provides faster recognition and identification for law enforcement officers. To enhance further the recognition capabilities for law enforcement officers and the nighttime safety of motorists, I recommend that legislation be enacted requiring both front and rear reflectorized license plates.

The issue of mandatory seat belt usage has been controversial. Many agree that as adults, we have the right to choose not to protect ourselves by refusing to buckle-up. I have given this issue careful consideration and have concluded that the evidence in favor of seat belts is overwhelming. Seat belts do save lives and reduce personal injury. Mandatory seat belt laws do increase the use of seat belts.

A total of 17 states and the District of Columbia now have mandatory use laws. The statistics from states that have implemented these laws are impressive. New York State went from a pre-mandatory usage rate of 16 percent to 57 percent usage with a 28 percent reduction in fatalities in the first six months of required use. In New Jersey usage went from 18 percent to 40 percent with a 21.5 percent reduction in front seat fatalities.

Motor vehicle accidents represent the number one cause of both lost work time and on-the-job fatalities. The ever-growing cost of motor vehicle accidents is a major health problem and one that I do not believe this state can afford to ignore. The protection of our citizens will always be a high priority for government. I believe the enactment of a mandatory seat belt law to be an appropriate role for government. Therefore, I recommend that legislation be passed in the 1986 Session requiring the use of seat belts.

Although we have made significant strides in meeting our responsibilities for public safety, we must remain alert to the continuing problems in this area which can spontaneously erupt into crisis situations. I ask you to join with me in providing viable solutions to these problems.

November 14, 1985

RE: Requiring Two Registration Plates for Motor Vehicles

Governor John Carlin  
Statehouse  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Attention Mr. John Myers

Dear Governor Carlin

On behalf of the Kansas Highway Patrol, I respectfully request that, during your deliberations on prospective proposals to be contained in your legislative message, consideration be given to requiring both front and rear license plates on motor vehicles registered in Kansas.

As you know, at one time Kansas required two plates to be displayed but reverted back to one some years ago, primarily because of the cost factor. Technological advances since that time allow plates to last much longer; also the numbering system that goes into effect in 1988 weakens the cost factor argument for not requiring a front registration plate.

I think you would find strong support for this proposal from all law enforcement organizations, mainly for the following reasons:

1. Two plates provide the opportunity for an officer on patrol to ascertain information regarding approaching vehicles, as well as those going away.
2. A front plate could be a valuable means of identifying vehicles observed by witnesses to crimes.
3. A front plate would enable officers to make positive identification on vehicles when only the front of the vehicle is visible.
4. Nighttime safety of the motoring public would be greatly enhanced by the presence of a front reflectorized plate on approaching vehicles with only one or no headlamp.
5. Studies show that a front reflectorized plate on a parked or stalled vehicle with no headlamps would also serve as an early warning to approaching nighttime drivers.

Governor John Carlin  
November 14, 1985  
Page #2

Latest U.S. Department of Transportation statistics indicate that thirty states, as well as the District of Columbia, now require plates on both the front and rear of vehicles registered in their jurisdictions.

We would appreciate your support of this request and will be happy to furnish additional information if you so desire.

Very truly yours

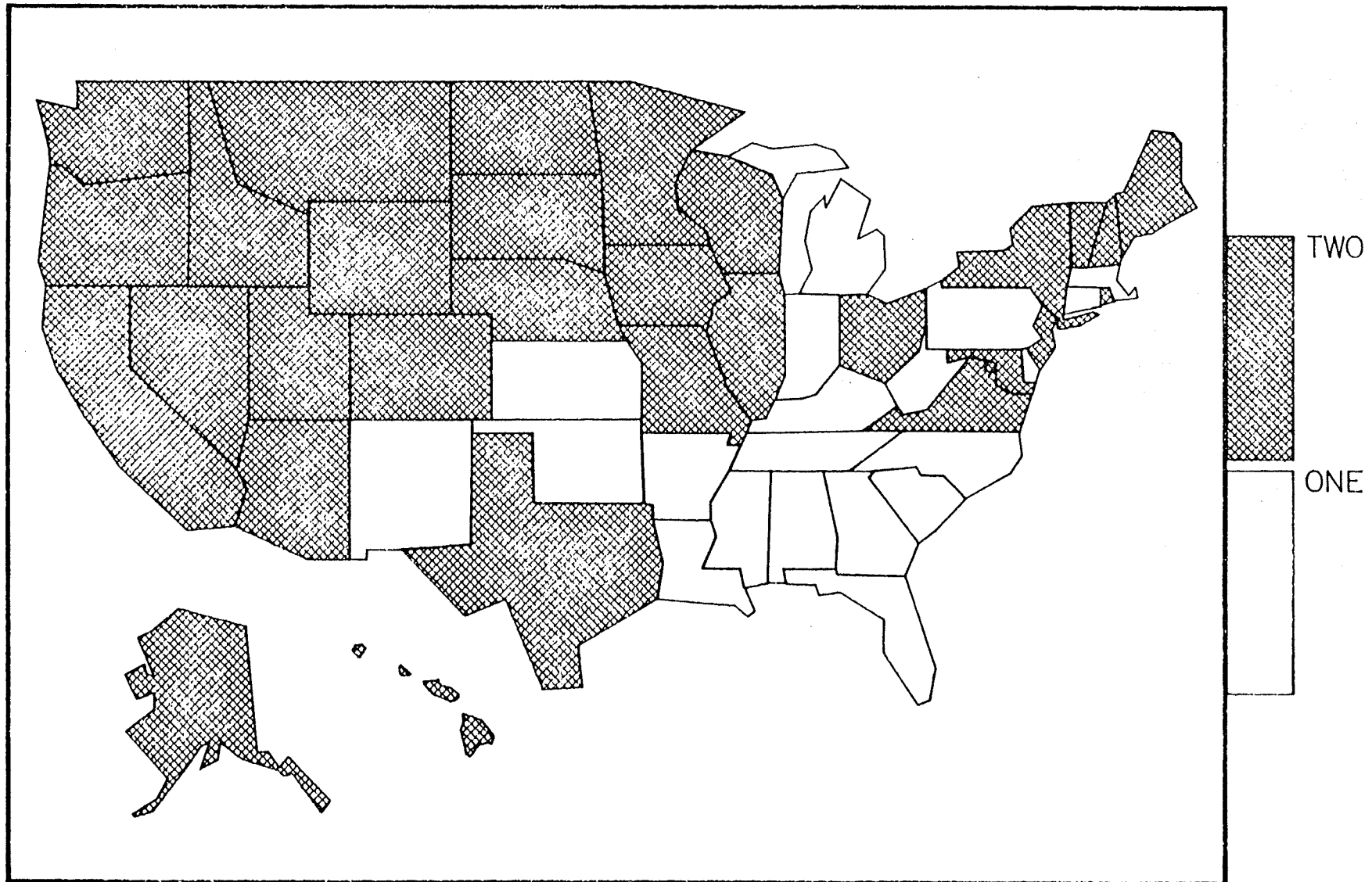
BERT CANTWELL  
Superintendent

BC:md

cc: Captain Donald L. Pickert

# LICENSE PLATES

*NUMBER OF PLATES PER VEHICLE*



WHY LAW ENFORCEMENT PEOPLE WANT TWO PLATES:

1. NEED TO MAKE POSITIVE VEHICLE I.D.
2. TWO PLATES GIVE OPPORTUNITY FOR VEHICLE I.D. COMING AND GOING.
3. TWO PLATES MAKE JOB SAFER WHEN APPROACHING SUSPECT CAR.
4. 75% OF OHIO OFFICERS MAKE ARRESTS "VERY OFTEN" OR "SOMETIMES" BASED UPON READING THE FRONT PLATE ON ONCOMING VEHICLES (2 PLATES).
5. 93% OF RESPONDENTS IN I.A.C.P. STUDY (1979) FAVORED TWO PLATES.
6. WORKING POLICE OFFICER SEES THREE FRONT PLATES ON APPROACHING TRAFFIC TO EVERY ONE REAR PLATE (KIERNAN 1979 I.A.C.P.).
7. CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN CRIME CONTROL WOULD BE ENHANCED WITH FRONT AND REAR PLATE.
8. OFTEN, THE ONLY REFLECTIVE DEVICE ON THE FRONT OF A CAR IS LICENSE PLATE.
9. APPROACHING "ONE-EYED" CAR - FRONT, REFLECTIVE PLATE POSITIONS APPROACHING CAR - RELATIVE TO YOUR POSITION.
10. BACK IN PARKING - FRONT PLATE ESSENTIAL FOR VEHICLE I.D.

# What is the officers' overall attitude towards dual plates?

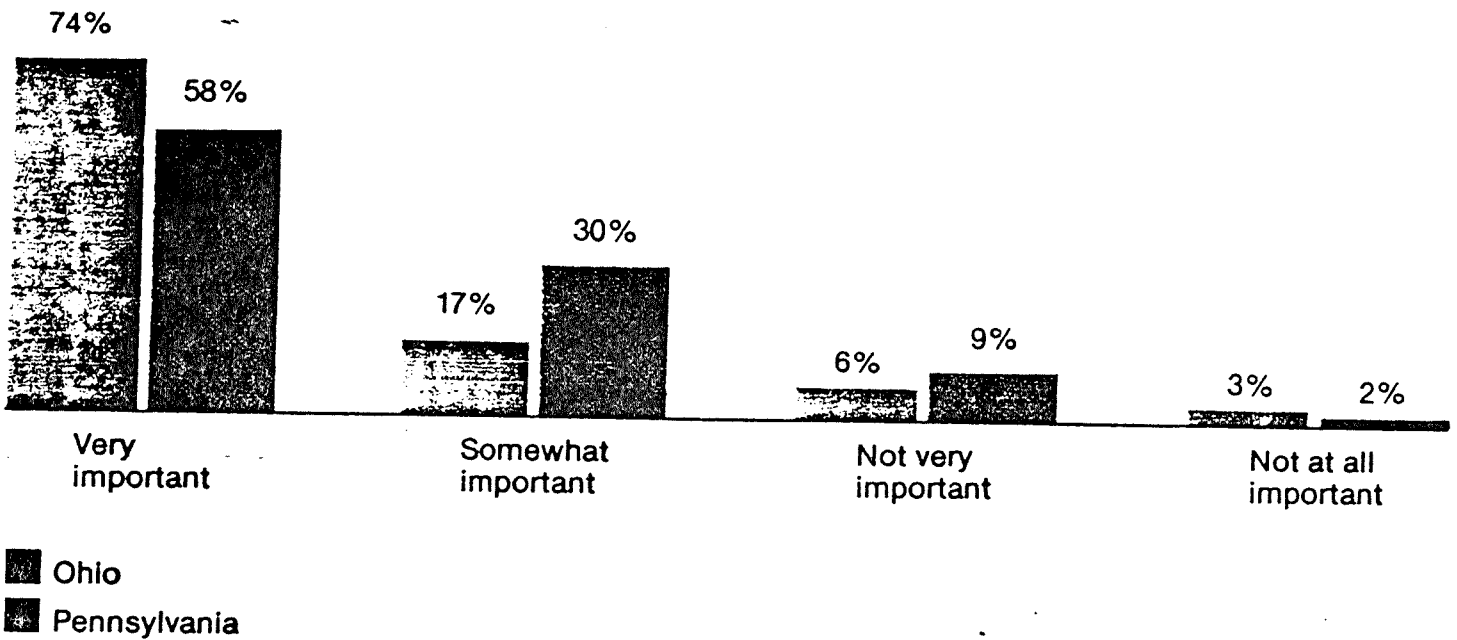
In summary, how important do you feel it is for vehicles to have two license plates?

- Very important       Somewhat important       Not very important  
 Not at all important       Don't know       Refused

Ohio officers, representing a two-plate state, are overwhelmingly supportive of a front plate, shown by three out of four Ohio officers (74%) stating that it is "very important" for vehicles to have two license plates.

Pennsylvania officers, who do not have experience with a statewide two-plate system, are also very supportive of a front plate, with over half of the officers (58%) reporting that two plates are "very important".

	Total Ohio Officers	Total Pennsylvania Officers
Very important	74%	58%
Somewhat important	17	30
Not very important	6	9
Not at all important	3	2
Don't know	1	1
Refused	1	1
(Officers interviewed)	(1,564)	(943)



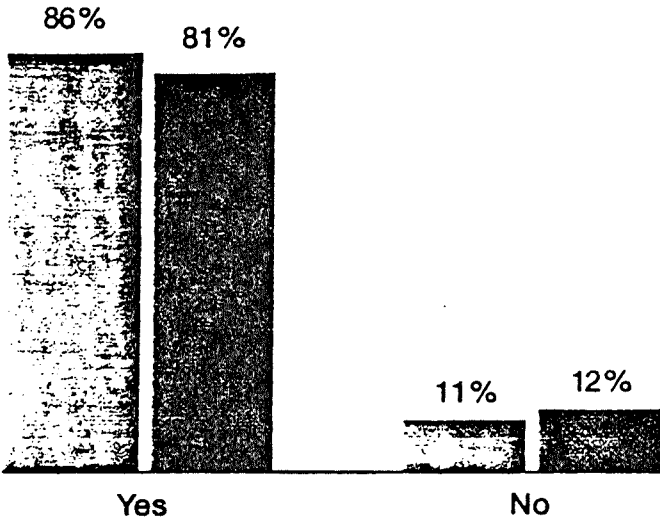
# Does a two-plate system increase police officer safety?

Overall, do you feel that two license plates rather than one plate makes your job safer?

- Yes                     
  No                     
  Don't know                     
  Refused

Expressing serious concern for their own safety, officers in both Ohio and Pennsylvania feel that two plates make their job safer. Specifically, six out of seven Ohio officers (86%) and eight out of ten Pennsylvania officers (81%) state that the safety of their job is enhanced by the presence of a front plate.

	Total Ohio Officers	Total Pennsylvania Officers
Yes	86%	81%
No	11	12
Don't know	3	7
Refused	1	1
(Officers interviewed)	(1,564)	(943)



Ohio  
 Pennsylvania



# How often are arrests based on front plate sightings?

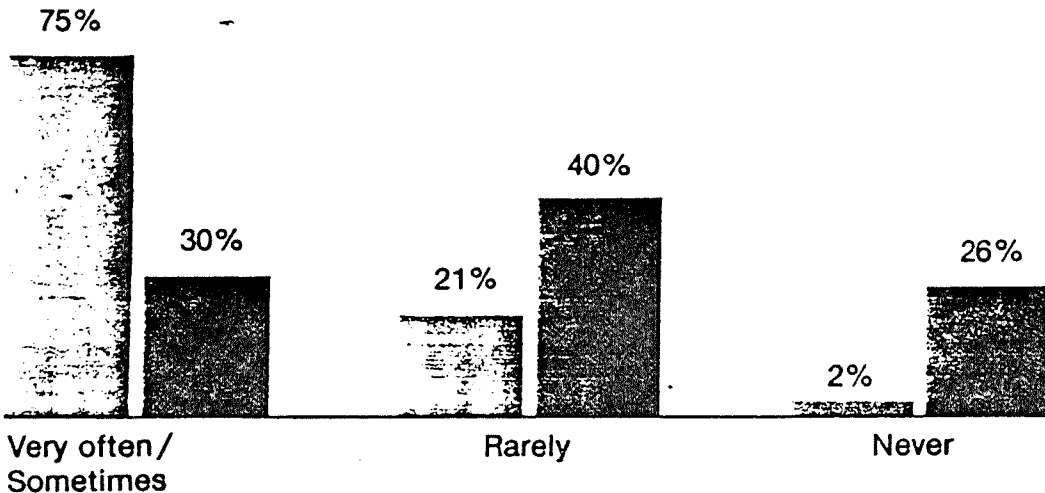
How often do you make arrests as a result of reading license plates on vehicles in the oncoming (opposing) traffic lane?

- Very often     Sometimes     Rarely     Never     Don't know     Refused

Three out of four (75%) Ohio officers make arrests "very often" (19%) or "sometimes" (56%) as a result of reading license plates on oncoming vehicles.

Comparison with Pennsylvania officer responses is not possible since Pennsylvania does not require a front plate. While the absence of a front plate is reflected in the Pennsylvania officer ratings, reports of frequent arrests due to reading front plates are most likely associated with arrests of drivers of out-of-state two-plate vehicles.

	Total Ohio Officers	Total Pennsylvania Officers
Very often	19%	3%
Sometimes	56	27
Rarely	21	40
Never	2	26
Don't know	2	3
Refused	1	1
(Officers interviewed)	(1,564)	(943)



- Ohio
- Pennsylvania

# Are turn-arounds in traffic reduced with the two-plate system?

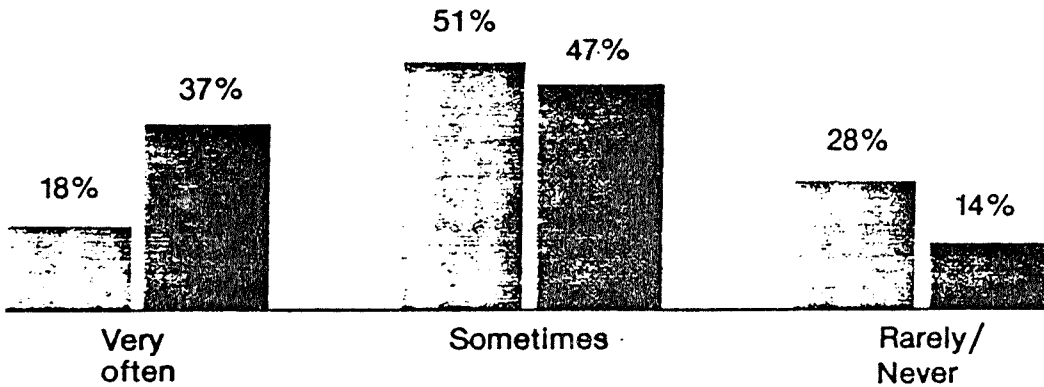
In the past year, how often have you had to turn around in traffic to pursue a vehicle that you were unable to identify from the front?

- Very often   
  Sometimes   
  Rarely   
  Never   
  Don't know   
  Refused

When asked to indicate how frequently an officer is called upon to pursue a vehicle which is unidentifiable from the front, over a third of single-plate system officers (37% of Pennsylvania officers) report that they must perform this action "very often".

In a dual-plate state such as Ohio, officers are called upon less frequently to turn around to pursue unidentifiable vehicles (only 18% of Ohio officers report turning around "very often"). This difference in attitudes indicates that the absence of a front plate is associated to some degree with the need to turn around frequently to pursue an unidentifiable vehicle and consequently, place the officer in a potentially dangerous situation.

	Total Ohio Officers	Total Pennsylvania Officers
Very often	18%	37%
Sometimes	51	47
Rarely	23	11
Never	5	3
Don't know	2	1
Refused	1	1
(Officers interviewed)	(1,564)	(943)



 Ohio  
 Pennsylvania

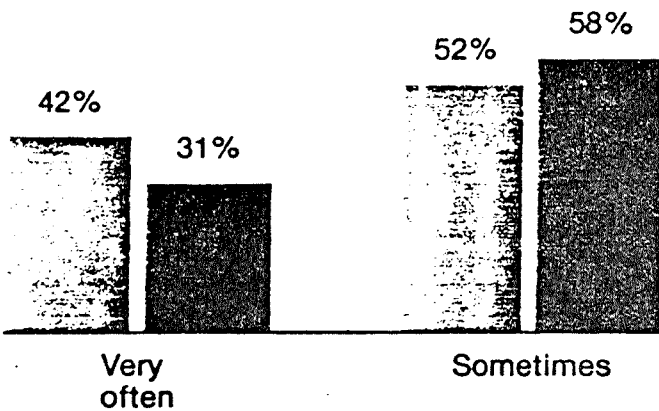
# Does the crime victim benefit from the two plate system?



How often do you respond to reports of crimes in which the victim has provided license plate information on the vehicle used in the crime?

- Very often   
  Sometimes   
  Rarely   
  Never   
  Don't know   
  Refused

The impact of a front plate on a citizen's ability to provide crime information is observed in the finding that Ohio officers with experience in a two-plate state are significantly more likely than officers in a single-plate state to receive license plate information from victims of crimes. Specifically, four out of ten Ohio officers (42%) report receiving this information "very often", while only a third (31%) of Pennsylvania officers make this same statement.

	Total Ohio Officers	Total Pennsylvania Officers
Very often	42%	31%
Sometimes	52	58
Rarely	6	10
Never	1	1
Don't know	1	1
Refused	1	1
(Officers interviewed)	(1,564)	(943)



 Ohio  
 Pennsylvania

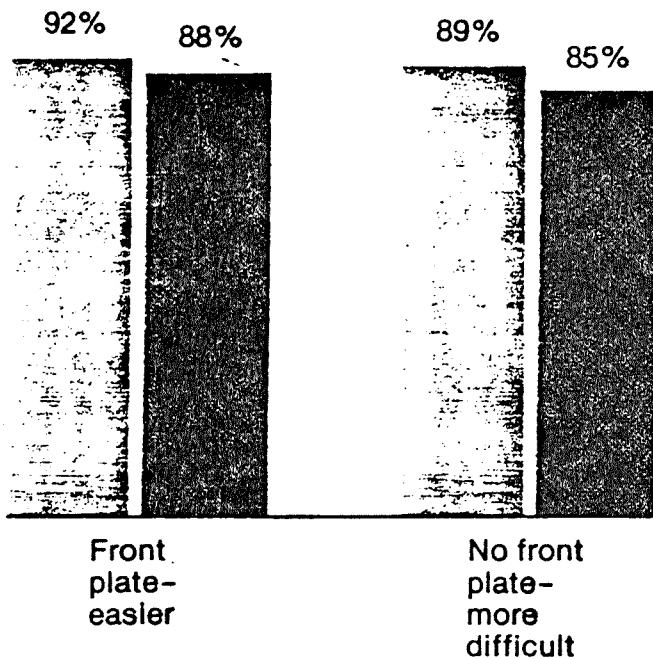
# Does a two-plate system make a significant improvement in vehicle identification?



Based on your experience with vehicles from a one-plate/two-plate state, do you feel that the absence/presence of a front plate makes it more difficult/easier to identify a vehicle?

- Yes                       No                       Don't know

Based on their experience with one-plate and two-plate vehicles, officers in both Ohio and Pennsylvania show overwhelming support for a front plate as an aid in identifying vehicles. Nine out of ten Ohio officers feel that the presence of a front plate makes it easier to identify a vehicle (92%) and the absence of this plate makes it more difficult to identify a vehicle (89%). Among Pennsylvania officers, these percentages are 88% and 85% respectively.

	Total Ohio Officers	Total Pennsylvania Officers
% who feel that the presence of a front plate makes it easier to identify a vehicle	92%	88%
% who feel that the absence of a front plate makes it more difficult to identify a vehicle	89%	85%
(Officers Interviewed)	(1,564)	(943)



 Ohio  
 Pennsylvania

# Descriptions of other situations where it is important to have dual license plates.

Please describe those situations in which it is important to have dual license plates.

	Total Ohio Officers	Total Pennsylvania Officers		Total Ohio Officers	Total Pennsylvania Officers
Moving vehicle identification — plates seen in any direction	19%	20%	Two different plates may indicate a stolen vehicle	4	2
Cars used in crimes more difficult to conceal	16	15	Traffic enforcement/surveillance	4	9
Two-way check on vehicles	13	9	Officer safety	4	6
Autos backed against walls/buildings	12	19	Easier to spot/read plates	4	6
Identification of vehicles	11	14	Radio in registration number without changing approach	4	4
Identification of stolen vehicles	11	10	Helps identify stolen plates	4	6
Assists in identification by witnesses/victims	10	11	Police stake out	4	2
Surveillance of suspects and vehicles	9	9	In most instances two plates are better	3	1
Hit and run accidents	8	9	Two plates rarely destroyed in accident	3	2
Criminals often "forget" to apply front plate	7	5	Meeting vehicles at night	2	1
Have one plate left when one lost	6	4	Inspection violations/parking violations	2	8
Vehicles leaving the scene can be identified	5	4	Identifying expired plates	2	8
Parking lot checks	4	6	Drive-offs (failure to pay)	1	1
			Identification of out-of-state plates	1	4
			Other	2	2
			Don't know	1	-
			Refused/no answer (Officers interviewed)	3	4
				(889)	(557)

**IACP  
VEHICLE IDENTIFICATION STUDY REPORT**

**\* \* \***

**UTILITY OF LICENSE PLATES  
FOR  
LAW ENFORCEMENT**

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**Prepared by the  
RESEARCH DIVISION  
BUREAU OF OPERATIONS AND RESEARCH  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE  
Galthersburg, Maryland 20760**

**April 1979**

## LAW ENFORCEMENT USE OF VEHICLE LICENSE PLATES

The major portion of the survey dealt with the use by law enforcement personnel of motor vehicle license plates and suggestions as to how the present systems might be improved. Of the 1,801 returned surveys, a number (128) were found to be nonprocessable due to failure to follow instructions or failure to complete any but the administrative portion of the survey. The remaining 1,673 surveys were analyzed initially as one group from which the major portion of this report is derived.

To gauge the general concerns of law enforcement, respondents were asked the importance of a number of law enforcement problems (to be scored on a scale of 0—no importance to 4—great importance). The area of highest importance to the respondents is that of general and/or "street" crime control, with a 3.76 score. Since this is the traditional emphasis of law enforcement efforts, this high ranking is appropriate. Narcotics enforcement and control as well as traffic enforcement and control both ranked high with 3.28 and 3.24 scores respectively. There was a slight drop to a score of 3.10 for organized crime. These four areas were the highest rated, all with overall scores of over 3.00 on the scale of 0 to 4. Thus it can be seen that although traffic control and enforcement is not perceived as the area with greatest importance, it is clustered in a general second place area after the traditional area of law enforcement emphasis.

Of lesser importance was juvenile delinquency prevention (2.96), other—as specified by the respondent (2.67), and vice control (2.17). At the lower end of importance was "white collar" crime control (1.92) and environmental protection control (1.27). It is understandable that a patrol officer or sergeant would rank the items in this general order.

## IMPORTANCE OF LICENSE PLATES

The survey also asked the importance of motor vehicle license plates as a tool of law enforcement in each of the above-mentioned areas. Once again using the 0 to 4 scale, several areas ranked very high (above 3.00 overall). These were traffic enforcement and control (3.66), general or "street" crime control (3.57), contribute to officers' safety in overall operations (3.39), narcotics enforcement and control (3.17), and contribute to overall public safety (3.01). So in these five areas, motor vehicle license plates were viewed by operational law enforcement as of primary importance. Well below these five were organized crime (2.57), vice control (2.22), other answers supplied by respondent (2.04), juvenile delinquency prevention (1.68), "white collar" crime (1.14), and environmental protection control (1.05).

It is important to note that of the three highest rated

areas of general concern to law enforcement (street crime, narcotics, and traffic control), the importance of license plates as a tool was scored as very important. So field officers and first-line supervisors recognize the importance of license plates in the areas of greatest concern in law enforcement. Also in those areas which were of least concern to the respondents ("white collar" crime and environmental protection control), there was less indicated importance of license plates as a useful tool. It should also be noted that the two added areas which concerned the safety factor to officers and to the overall public also scored very high in the importance of license plates.

## ONE VERSUS TWO LICENSE PLATES

A major point of analysis was differences based on one license plate (rear) systems as opposed to two license plates (front and rear) systems. When asked with which system the officer had most experience, 17 percent indicated substantial experience with both systems, 63 percent had mostly two-plates experience, and 20 percent had mostly one-plate experience. When asked how the officer would rate a two-plates system compared to a one-plate system, the overall responses indicated overwhelming support of a two-plates versus one-plate system. Thus, as a group, almost 75 percent indicated that two license plates were either absolutely essential or very important. More specifically, 39 percent stated that two plates were absolutely essential, 35 percent stated two plates were very important, 11 percent said two plates were necessary most of the time, 12 percent said that two plates were of some help, and only two percent said that one plate is enough. When analyzing only those participants from the 17 states with only one license plate, it was found that although there was slightly less importance placed on two-plates systems, there was much support for a two-plates system over a one-plate system. In these one-plate states, only six percent indicated that one plate was enough for law enforcement requirements as opposed to 53 percent which said that a two-plates system was either very important or absolutely essential.

When asked to estimate the percentage of improvement a two-plates system provides as a law enforcement tool compared with a one-plate system, the overall survey results indicate a 53.6 percent improvement in correctly reading the license plate and a 59.3 percent improvement in doing the officer's total job better, which was in the considerable improvement area. When analyzing only those surveys from one-plate states, the percentages were slightly lower (47.6 and 53.5 percent respectively), but these results still indicate that officers in one-plate states believe there would be considerable improvement if a two-plates system was used.

When asked which system for identifying motor vehi-

cles serves the needs of law enforcement better, 93 percent of the total survey responses indicated two license plates, three percent said one license plate, and three percent indicated no preference. In the one-plate group, 83 percent indicated the two-plates system, nine percent preferred the one-plate system, and eight percent showed no preference. This indicates massive support for the two-plates system by law enforcement nationwide and specifically in states using only one plate currently.

Participants were also asked if in their experience two license plates have greater value than one plate for attendants monitoring parking at meters or for school-crossing guards. In the total survey, 74 percent indicated that two plates had greater value to parking attendants, seven percent did not, and 19 percent had no opinion. Concerning the value to school-crossing guards, school-bus drivers, and similar personnel, 84 percent stated that two license plates have greater value than one, seven percent did not agree, and nine percent had no opinion. From these two questions; the value of a two-plates system to others associated with public safety is indicated as very high. This is in addition to the support for two plates as a tool to support law enforcement directly.

The participants were asked how often over the past month the presence of only one license plate on a motor vehicle hampered their ability to do their job. Five percent said this occurred very often, 17 percent said often, 37 percent stated that it happens occasionally, 26 percent said seldom, and 16 percent said never. Thus, 59 percent indicated that the presence of only one license plate hampered them occasionally or more often. This is significant when one notes that only 17 states have only one license plate, representing about one quarter of the survey respondents. The median estimated number of instances where the presence of one license plate hampered the officer was 29, or again about once a day. This would indicate that using a two-plates system would allow for improvement in daily operations of each officer in the country.

## CONCLUSIONS

The study, designed to determine how law enforcement officers use motor vehicle license plates and how they perceive that these plates may be improved, revealed the following points:

- License plates are a most important tool in law enforcement, especially in the more important areas of concern which include general and/or street crime control, traffic enforcement and control, and narcotics enforcement and control.
- License plates, in addition, contribute to police officer safety in overall operations and to overall public safety.
- There is a need to improve the design of license plates for greater legibility in general, especially for reading them at higher speeds both day and night.
- There was an overwhelming choice for vehicle identification systems using two license plates, both front and rear, in preference to a one-plate system, rear only.
- There was a decided preference for reflectorized license plates because of their greater legibility and safety value.
- There is a need for better state identification with distinctive colors being the preferred method to convey this information.





# Kansas Food Dealers' Association, Inc.

2809 WEST 47th STREET SHAWNEE MISSION, KANSAS 66205

PHONE: (913) 384-3838

February 5, 1986

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DIRECTOR OF  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

FRANCES KASTNER

RE: SB 438

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
JIM SHEEHAN  
Shawnee Mission

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee. I am Frances Kastner, Director of Governmental Affairs for the Kansas Food Dealers Association. Our membership includes retailers, wholesalers and distributors of food products throughout the State of Kansas.

In some instances, our members offer gasoline for sale as a part of a convenience store operation, or in rural areas where the gasoline pumps are put in as a service to customers who would have to travel a good distance to purchase gasoline.

As you may recall, we appeared before you last year on a similar measure dealing with issuance of two license tags for Kansas automobiles.

We are just as concerned with the problem this year and find that many of our members who sell gasoline are suffering increased losses from non-payment of gas purchases.

Certainly being able to view the license tag from either the front or back would be of benefit in tracing those who leave the premises without payment of their purchases.

We would appreciate your favorable consideration of SB 438, and thank you for the opportunity of appearing before you today.

Frances Kastner

ATT. (4)  
S. T+U 2/5/86

ATT. (5)

DORIS LARSEN  
COUNTY TREASURER  
LINCOLN COUNTY  
LINCOLN, KANSAS 67455

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee

The Kansas County Treasurers Association appreciates the opportunity to appear before this committee. It is not our intention to oppose or support, but rather to express our concerns in regard to SB438.

SB 438 provides for the issuance of two license plates to motor vehicles of 12,000 pounds or less. The Kansas County Treasurers Association respectfully requests, that if SB438 becomes law, all motor vehicles, except mobile homes, trailers, truck tractors, motorcycles, and mopeds, be issued two license plates to assure a consistent, invariable and uniform issuance of license plates.

Lines 0048 thru 0055 provide that in each registration year license plates are not issued, for the renewal of registration, the Division of Vehicles shall furnish two decals to vehicles required to display two license plates. To assure consistency and uniformity we support the issuance of two decals.

Pursuant to KSA8-129, registration applications made by mail shall be accompanied by a fee of fifty cents (\$.50) for postage and other expenses incidental to mailing license plates. The cost of mailing two license plates, at present rates is \$1.56 to \$1.75, depending upon weight of the plates. An increase in postal rates already is being considered, future postal fees are impossible to predict. Pursuant to KSA8-145, any balance remaining in the motor vehicle special fund on December 31, each year, shall be withdrawn and credited to the general fund of the county, thus there is never a carry-over balance. How will the counties that maintain separate motor vehicle offices, funded solely from the motor vehicle operation, absorb the shortfall. For example, Wyandotte County handled 127,313 registrations by mail in 1985, using the conservative mailing fee of \$1.56, mailing two tags would have created a shortfall of \$134,951.78.

ATT. (5)  
S. T & U 2/5/86

DORIS LARSEN  
COUNTY TREASURER  
LINCOLN COUNTY  
LINCOLN, KANSAS 67455

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Is SB438 a state mandate that county government will subsidize, and will county commissioners be willing to fund the short fall?

To defray the cost of mailing and handling two tags, we would amend lines 0400 thru 0402 to read "\$1.00 shall be added to the amount of each motor vehicle annual fee when such vehicle is required to display two license plates, \$.50 to be deposited in the special fund created pursuant to KSAS-145".

Will overworked, undermanned law enforcement officials have sufficient time and staff to enforce the display of two license plates or will some vehicle owners see an opportunity to register one vehicle and operate two? We would urge that SB438, if enacted, be strictly enforced to assure no loss of revenue to the state or the county.

In conclusion we would respectfully request that if SB438 is enacted, it not be repealed before the license plate series is completed, as occurred in the 1976 registration year.



Doris Larsen,

Lincoln County Treasurer  
Chairman, Legislative Committee  
Kansas County Treasurers Association

ATT. (6)

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

TO: SENATE BILL NO. 438

On page 11, in line 400, by striking "\$.50" and inserting "\$1.00"; line 402, preceding the period, by inserting ", \$.50 of which shall be deposited in the special fund created pursuant to K.S.A. 1985 Supp. 8-145, and amendments thereto";

S. T+U ATT. (6) 2/5/86

ATT. ②

CRS429m1

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

MR. PRESIDENT:

Your Committee on Transportation and Utilities

Recommends that Senate Bill No. 429

"AN ACT concerning motor vehicles; relating to handicapped parking; amending K.S.A. 8-161 and K.S.A. 1985 Supp. 8-2118 and repealing the existing sections; also repealing K.S.A. 1985 Supp. 8-132a."

Be amended:

On page 1, in line 31, by striking "person" and inserting "Kansas resident"; in line 35, by striking "one"; in line 36, by striking "to" and inserting ". Such placard shall"; also in line 36, by striking "from" and inserting "immediately below"; in line 38, by striking "by the director of vehicles" and inserting "so as to be maximally visible from outside the vehicle";

On page 2, by striking lines 73 through 78; in line 79, by striking "(f)" and inserting "(e)";

On page 4, following line 132, by inserting a new subsection to read as follows:

"(b) Violation of subsection (a) is an unclassified misdemeanor punishable by a fine of not more than \$25.";

Also on page 4, in line 133, by striking "(b)" and inserting "(c)"; in line 140, by striking all after the first "of"; in line 141, by striking all before the period and inserting "a class C misdemeanor"; in line 145, by striking "an unclassified"; in line 146, by striking all before the period and inserting "a class C misdemeanor"; in line 152, after "veteran", by inserting "as defined in K.S.A. 8-160 and amendments thereto"; also in line 152, after "who", by inserting "resides in Kansas and who"

On page 5, in line 167, by striking "person" and inserting "Kansas resident"; in line 168, after "any", by inserting "resident";

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S. T+U 2/5/86

On page 6, by striking lines 199 through 244;

By striking all of pages 7 through 11;

On page 12, by striking lines 900 through 927; in line 928, by striking "and 8-"; in line 929, by striking "2118";

In the title, in line 19, by striking "and K.S.A. 1985 Supp. 8-2118"; in line 20, by striking "sections" and inserting "section";

And the bill be passed as amended.

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Chairperson