

‘Back the Blue’ and City of Topeka License Plates; Personalized Plates; HB 2346

HB 2346 authorizes “Back the Blue” and City of Topeka distinctive license plates and allows, on and after January 1, 2025, any distinctive license plate to also be a personalized plate.

New Specialized License Plates

The bill authorizes “Back the Blue” and City of Topeka distinctive license plates to be issued to any Kansas resident who is an owner or lessee of one or more passenger vehicles or trucks registered for a gross weight of 20,000 pounds or less, beginning January 1, 2024. [*Note:* Continuing law also requires the Division of Vehicles (Division), Department of Revenue, to produce a distinctive license plate for a motorcycle upon request from the sponsoring organization.]

The bill requires a \$30 law enforcement support fee for each “Back the Blue” plate issued to support the Kansas Chapter of Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS), Inc. For the City of Topeka license plate, the bill requires a flag image payment of between \$25 and \$100 to be paid to the Greater Topeka Partnership Inc., as the city’s designee for the City of Topeka license plate. It also requires a change of designee to be by mutual agreement of the City of Topeka and the Greater Topeka Partnership, Inc.

An applicant for either license plate will be able to apply for the license plate beginning 60 days prior to their renewal of registration date on a form designated by the Director of Vehicles (Director). No license plate or registration issued pursuant to the bill will be transferable to any other person, but the Director could transfer the distinctive license plate from a leased vehicle to a purchased vehicle.

The bill also requires renewals of registrations to be made annually in the manner provided in continuing law. No renewal for the new plates will be allowed until an applicant has paid the county treasurer the appropriate fee.

The bill requires COPS to provide an email address to all county treasurers for an applicant to call for information concerning the application process or the status of the license plate application.

The bill requires the “Back the Blue” license plate to have a background design with an emblem or colors that designate the plate as a “Back the Blue” license plate. The bill states the City of Topeka flag was designed through a community input process managed by the Greater Topeka Partnership, Inc., adopted by the city’s governing body in 2019, and no individual or entity has intellectual property rights regarding use of its image.

As a condition of receiving either license plate or subsequent registration renewal, the applicant will be required to provide consent to the Division, authorizing release of the applicant’s name, address, law enforcement support fee or image payment amount, plate number, and vehicle type to the State Treasurer and COPS or the City of Topeka.

Development Fees and Minimum Orders

The “Back the Blue” plate established by the bill is exempt from the requirement for distinctive license plate sponsors to submit a nonrefundable amount of up to \$5,000 to defray the Division’s costs of developing the plates, but manufacturing and issuance of the plates is conditioned upon receipt of a minimum order of 100 plates with payment of the personalized license plate fee as specified in continuing law. A transfer of \$4,000 from the State Highway Fund to the Distinctive License Plate Fund will be made once the minimum number of paid orders has been received.

Under continuing law, City of Topeka license plates will not be issued unless there is a guarantee of an initial issuance of least 250 license plates and a nonrefundable amount not to exceed \$5,000 is submitted to defray costs of the Division for developing the distinctive license plate.

Personalized Specialized License Plates

The bill permits, on and after January 1, 2025, any distinctive license plate to also be a personalized plate as prescribed by continuing law. Under the bill, any license plate that is both distinctive and personalized will be subject to a doubling of the fee for a personalized plate, which is \$40. The fee will not be doubled if the license plate is one for which eligibility is related to military honors or service or is one of four specialized license plates for which royalty payments go to state entities: Children’s Trust Fund, helping schools, breast cancer research, and support Kansas arts license plates.