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## AMATEUR RADIO OPERATORS' LICENSE PLATES

House Bill 4201 with committee  
amendments  
First Analysis (3-24-98)

Sponsor: Rep. Paul Baade  
Committee: Transportation

### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

According to the Office of the Secretary of State, there are between 5,800 and 5,900 amateur radio operators in Michigan who have license plates that include their call letters and call numbers. Many provide assistance to officials of the U.S. Weather Service and the American Red Cross, to better ensure the health and safety of citizens.

Under current law, an amateur radio operator can order a license plate for an automobile that has on it his or her radio call letters. However, the call numbers and letters on the plate are sometimes confusing, since the plate does not now contain the words "amateur radio operator."

Since 1953, the license plate has been provided by the secretary of state for a \$2 service fee, although the production cost alone of each plate now runs about \$4.25.

Some argue that amateur radio operators should be able to purchase license plates from the Office of the Secretary of State that contain both their designation and call letters, and that the fee for the plates should be increased

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

Under the Michigan Vehicle Code, the holder of an unexpired technician, general, conditional, advanced, or extra class amateur radio license issued by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) may apply for a registration plate inscribed with the official FCC amateur radio call letters he or she has been assigned. The bill would add that the plate should have the words "Amateur Radio Operator" inscribed beneath the registration numbers. Further, the bill would require the applicant to pay a \$7 service fee (instead of the current \$2 service fee), in addition to the regular registration fee.

MCL 257.217a

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the increase in fee revenue generated by the bill would depend on the number of applicants for the new plate, and is expected to be minimal (up to \$29,000 if all 5,800 current plates were converted to the new plate). (3-23-98)

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

This bill would allow amateur radio operators to have that designation appear of their license plates, along with their call numbers and letters. The service fee for the amateur radio operator's's license has not been raised since 1953. So this bill also would increase the service fee from \$2 to \$7, an amount that better reflects the production cost of the special license plate.

#### ***POSITIONS:***

The Office of the Secretary of State supports the bill. (3-19-98)

The American Radio Relay League supports the bill. (3-20-98)

Analyst: J. Hunault

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

House Bill 4201 (3-24-98)