

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## HB 1963

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As of February 20, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to prohibiting license plate covers.

**Brief Description:** Prohibiting license plate covers.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Ramos, Fitzgibbon, Ryu, Berry, Duerr, Reed, Callan, Donaghy and Hackney.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/8/24, 59-38.

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 2/20/24.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that license plates must be uncovered.
- Requires that, until January 1, 2025, the penalty for a violation of using a license plate cover is a written warning.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Staff:** Brandon Popovac (786-7465)

**Background:** Vehicles required to be registered with the Department of Licensing (DOL) must display license plates or decals assigned by DOL. License plates must be:

- attached conspicuously at the front and rear of each vehicle if two license plates have been issued, or at the rear of the vehicle if one license plate has been issued;
- kept clean and be able to be plainly seen and read at all times; and
- attached in a horizontal position at a distance of not more than four feet from the ground.

The Washington State Patrol may grant exceptions to license plate display requirements if the body construction of the vehicle makes compliance impossible.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

It is an unlawful to use a license plate holder, frame, or other material that changes, alters, or makes a license plate or plates illegible, with a base penalty of \$93 for such unlawful use.

**Summary of Bill:** License plates must be kept uncovered to be plainly seen and read at all times. It is unlawful to use any material that conceals, obstructs, or distorts the legibility of the license plate.

Until January 1, 2025, the penalty for using a license plate cover is only a written warning, which must include information about the new license plate display requirements and the applicable penalty.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The bill is similar to one introduced a couple of years ago. The new temporary license plates currently in use are helpful for toll revenue collection. Most license plate covers are tinted or blurry and are not readable by toll technologies or other law enforcement. There is an alarming increase in the use of license plate covers or not displaying license plates at all, with little to no consequences for such drivers. These drivers are unfairly avoiding tolls. Identifying perpetrators in hit and run incidents is critically tied to license plate identification.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Bill Ramos, Prime Sponsor; Iñaki Longa.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.