

(H. B. 2289)

(No. 306)

(Approved December 27, 2006)

AN ACT

To amend Section 2.31 of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Vehicles and Traffic Act of Puerto Rico,” in order to incorporate additional provisions on the use of the special license plate ex-prisoner of war, and to extend the right to have special license plates to other veteran classifications.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. This maxim has been repeatedly confirmed throughout history. The thousands of Puerto Ricans that wear the uniform of the Armed Forces of the United States of America and the hundred thousand veterans that coexist with us are examples of the readiness to pay that price, having served honorably. Puerto Rican veterans have distinguished themselves in the Armed Forces due to their exceptional service, courage and sacrifice in defense of the causes of democracy. Therefore, the Government of Puerto Rico deems it appropriate and necessary to grant special benefits to these exemplary citizens.

One of the benefits granted to a very special category of our veterans is the use of a special license plate on their motor vehicle for those who went through the bitter experience of being a war prisoner. This is a gesture of acknowledgement that is certainly not in proportion with what this meant for those human beings, but is a reminder of their bravery and sacrifice.

This benefit does not require the payment of additional fees, such as in the case of other special license plates, but at the same time, it has the defect

that personalized license plates have in Puerto Rico, that they are not considered as fully “official.” This discourages the use of the privilege. For this reason, it would be just to allow these veterans, as well as their surviving spouses, once they have died, to use the special license plate as their only official license plate. There are other categories of veterans that we can also acknowledge, such as those that earned the Purple Heart for combat wounds, and those who have completed a military career, as well as the regular members of National Guard and Reserve members that are subject to federal activation.

This Act hopes to be able to make a little more inclusive the modest homage we render to those to whom we all owe so much.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- Section 2.31 of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Vehicles and Traffic Act of Puerto Rico,” to read as follows:

“Section 2.31.- Special license plates for former prisoners of war, Purple Heart decorated soldiers, retired career soldiers, and Armed Forces Reserves members.

At the request of the party concerned, the Secretary shall issue a special license plate to every veteran or soldier within the following categories who owns a motor vehicle and is duly certified by the Federal Department of Veterans’ Affairs or the corresponding branch of the Armed Forces:

1. ex-prisoner of war veterans; and their surviving spouse after his/her death, upon due certification;
2. veterans decorated with the Purple Heart for combat wounds received in the warfront;

3. veterans with career member retirement pensions from any of the five branches of the United States Armed Forces or their Reserve Corps, including the National Guard;
4. regular participating members of a duly organized unit of the Armed Forces or National Guard in Puerto Rico, subject to activation for federal service.

The issuing of the special license plate shall be subject to the following rules:

- (a) The special license plate shall have the registration number of the motor vehicle, shall be the official license plate for all legal purposes, and shall be affixed to the back of the motor vehicle.
- (b) In the motor vehicle registration, the necessary information to identify the special license plate shall be included, together with the corresponding official registration of the motor vehicle.
- (c) The issuing of a special license plate for ex-prisoner of war veterans and their surviving spouse shall not require any additional payment to that provided by law for the license plates of private vehicles. In other cases, the veteran or soldier shall pay the corresponding fees, without detriment to the rights or benefits granted to veterans pursuant to Section 2.31 – A of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, concerning the issuing of distinctive license plates exempted from the payment of fees for veterans.
- (d) The Secretary shall provide, through regulations, all that concerns the design, size, colors, location, issue, use, renewal, and canceling of said special license plates, as well as any other

details deemed necessary. In addition to the special license plate, a sticker shall be issued, in both official languages, with specific information on the category of the veteran or soldier that availed himself/herself thereof. The Secretary shall have the design of the special license plate and the sticker pertaining to each category in the Department of State to guarantee their exclusiveness.

- (e) Any application for said special license plates shall include the proper certification of the Federal Department of Veterans' Affairs, or in the case of members in service, of the corresponding branch of the Armed Forces or reserve corps.
- (f) The use of said special license plate on the public roads of Puerto Rico is only authorized during the effective term of the official license plate.
- (g) The Secretary may cancel or revoke the authorization to use said special license plate for failing to comply with the provisions of this Section, as provided by regulations.
- (h) Any person who displays a special veteran's license plate or an imitation or simulation thereof without being authorized to do so shall incur a misdemeanor, and if convicted, shall be sanctioned with a fine of not less than two hundred (200) nor more than five hundred (500) dollars.

Section 2.- The Secretary of Transportation and Public Works, in coordination with the Office of the Veterans' Advocate, shall implement the regulations necessary to enforce the provisions of this Act within the first six (6) months of its effectiveness.

Section 3.- This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 306 (H.B. 2289) of the 4th Session of the 15th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to amend Section 2.31 of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Vehicles and Traffic Act of Puerto Rico,” in order to incorporate additional provisions on the use of the special license plate ex-prisoner of war, and to extend the right to have special license plates to other veteran classifications,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 30th of April of 2007.

Francisco J. Domenech
Director