

**House File 974 - Introduced**

HOUSE FILE 974  
BY COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

(SUCCESSOR TO HF 525)  
(SUCCESSOR TO HSB 144)

(COMPANION TO SF 488 BY COMMITTEE  
ON TRANSPORTATION)

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act relating to vehicle registration plates, including  
2 registration plate frames and Gadsden flag special  
3 registration plates, providing fees, and making  
4 appropriations.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. Section 321.34, Code 2025, is amended by adding  
2 the following new subsection:

3 NEW SUBSECTION. 11E. *Gadsden flag plates.*

4 a. Upon application and payment of the proper fees, the  
5 director may issue Gadsden flag plates to the owner of a motor  
6 vehicle subject to registration under section 321.109, subsection  
7 1, autocycle, motor truck, motor home, multipurpose vehicle,  
8 motorcycle, trailer, or travel trailer.

9 b. Gadsden flag plates shall be designed by the department.  
10 The background shall be yellow at the top and bottom, with the  
11 color fading into white in the center. The plate's numbers and  
12 letters shall be black. The left side of the plate shall depict  
13 a black and white rattlesnake coiled on green grass. The image  
14 depicting the coiled rattlesnake shall be at least three inches  
15 tall and two inches wide. The phrase "Don't Tread on Me" shall  
16 appear at the bottom of the plate.

17 c. The special Gadsden flag fee for letter-number designated  
18 Gadsden flag plates is fifty dollars. An applicant may obtain  
19 personalized Gadsden flag plates upon payment of the fee for  
20 personalized plates as provided in subsection 5, which is in  
21 addition to the special Gadsden flag fee. Personalized plates  
22 authorized by this subsection shall be limited to no more than  
23 five numerals, letters, or combinations of numerals and letters.

24 d. The fees collected by the director under this subsection  
25 shall be paid monthly to the treasurer of state and deposited in  
26 the road use tax fund. The treasurer of state shall transfer  
27 monthly from the statutory allocations fund created under section  
28 321.145, subsection 2, to the general fund of the state an amount  
29 equal to the special fees collected in the previous month for  
30 Gadsden flag plates, minus one dollar per issuance or renewal  
31 of the plates that month. Such moneys are appropriated to  
32 the department of public safety to distribute in the form of  
33 grants to provide education and training on the right to keep  
34 and bear arms protected under the Constitution of the United  
35 States and the Constitution of the State of Iowa, and training

1 on firearm safety. In the awarding of grants, the department  
2 of public safety shall give first consideration to any official  
3 state association of the national rifle association and similar  
4 nonprofit organizations. Notwithstanding section 8.33, moneys  
5 appropriated under this subsection shall not revert to the  
6 general fund of the state.

7 e. Upon receipt of the special registration plates, the  
8 applicant shall surrender the current registration plates to  
9 the county treasurer. The county treasurer shall validate  
10 the special registration plates in the same manner as regular  
11 registration plates are validated under this section. The annual  
12 special Gadsden flag fee for letter-number designated plates is  
13 fifty dollars which shall be paid in addition to the regular  
14 annual registration fee. The annual fee for personalized Gadsden  
15 flag plates is five dollars which shall be paid in addition  
16 to the annual special Gadsden flag fee and the regular annual  
17 registration fee. The annual special Gadsden flag fee shall be  
18 credited as provided under paragraph "d".

19 f. The department shall not condition the issuance of Gadsden  
20 flag plates on the receipt of any number of orders for Gadsden  
21 flag plates.

22 Sec. 2. Section 321.37, subsection 3, Code 2025, is amended  
23 to read as follows:

24 3. ~~It is unlawful for the~~ The owner of a vehicle to shall not  
25 place any a frame around or over the a registration plate which  
26 does not permit full view of all numerals and letters printed on  
27 the registration plate, other than the name of the county.

28 Sec. 3. Section 321.166, subsections 2 and 9, Code 2025, are  
29 amended to read as follows:

30 2. Every registration plate or pair of plates shall display  
31 a registration plate number which shall consist of alphabetical  
32 or numerical characters or a combination thereof and the name of  
33 this state, which may be abbreviated. Every registration plate  
34 issued by the county treasurer shall display the name of the  
35 county, including any plate issued pursuant to section 321.34,

1 except Pearl Harbor and purple heart registration plates issued  
2 prior to January 1, 1997; and collegiate, fire fighter, and  
3 medal of honor, and Gadsden flag registration plates. Special  
4 truck registration plates shall display the word "special". The  
5 department may adopt rules to implement this subsection.

6 9. Special registration plates issued pursuant to section  
7 321.34, other than gold star, medal of honor, collegiate, fire  
8 fighter, natural resources, blackout, and flying our colors, and  
9 Gadsden flag registration plates, shall be consistent with the  
10 design and color of regular registration plates but shall provide  
11 a space on a portion of the plate for the purpose of allowing the  
12 placement of a distinguishing processed emblem or an organization  
13 decal. Special registration plates shall also comply with the  
14 requirements for regular registration plates as provided in this  
15 section to the extent the requirements are consistent with the  
16 section authorizing a particular special vehicle registration  
17 plate.

18 EXPLANATION

19 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
20 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

21 This bill relates to vehicle registration plates.

22 The bill authorizes the department of transportation (DOT) to  
23 design and issue Gadsden flag special registration plates. The  
24 bill requires the plate's background to be yellow at the top and  
25 bottom, with the color fading into white in the center. The  
26 plate's numbers and letters must be black. The left side of  
27 the plate must contain the image of a rattlesnake in black and  
28 white coiled on green grass. The phrase "Don't Tread on Me" must  
29 appear at the bottom of the plate.

30 The bill provides that the special Gadsden flag fee for  
31 letter-number designated Gadsden flag plates is \$50. An  
32 applicant may obtain personalized Gadsden flag plates upon  
33 payment of the \$25 fee for personalized plates set forth under  
34 current law, which is in addition to the special Gadsden flag  
35 fee. Personalized Gadsden flag plates are limited to five

1 numerals and letters. The annual special Gadsden flag fee for  
2 letter-number designated plates is \$50, which is in addition  
3 to the regular annual registration fee. The annual fee for  
4 personalized Gadsden flag plates is \$5, which is in addition  
5 to the annual special Gadsden flag fee and the regular annual  
6 registration fee.

7 The fees collected by the DOT must be paid monthly to the  
8 treasurer of state and deposited in the road use tax fund  
9 (RUTF). The treasurer of state must transfer monthly from the  
10 statutory allocations fund to the general fund of the state an  
11 amount equal to the special fees collected in the previous month  
12 for the Gadsden flag plates, minus \$1 per issuance or renewal  
13 of the plates that month. Such moneys are appropriated to  
14 department of public safety (DPS) to distribute in the form of  
15 grants to provide education and training on the right to keep  
16 and bear arms, and training on firearm safety. In the awarding  
17 of grants, DPS must give first consideration to any official  
18 state association of the national rifle association and similar  
19 nonprofit organizations.

20 The bill prohibits the DOT from conditioning the issuance of  
21 Gadsden flag plates on the receipt of any number of orders for  
22 Gadsden flag plates.

23 Gadsden flag plates are exempt from the general requirements  
24 to display the name of the county that issues the plates and to  
25 be consistent with the design and color of regular registration  
26 plates.

27 Under current law, nonprofit organizations are authorized  
28 to apply to the DOT for approval to issue a decal of the  
29 organization's own design to be displayed on special registration  
30 plates with space reserved for an organizational decal. The  
31 nonprofit organization may charge a fee and retain any payment  
32 received for the organizational decal. Code section 321.34(13)  
33 sets forth the application process and certain limitations for  
34 nonprofit organizations and decal designs.

35 Under current law, an owner of a vehicle who places any frame

1 around or over a registration plate which does not permit full  
2 view of all numerals and letters printed on the registration  
3 plate, including the name of the county printed on the bottom of  
4 the plate, commits a simple misdemeanor punishable by a scheduled  
5 fine of \$30. Under the bill, a registration plate frame is no  
6 longer required to permit full view of the name of the county.

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