



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

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**REGISTRATION OF PICKUP CAMPERS**

**House Bill 5418 (Substitute H-1)**  
**First Analysis (2-1-90)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Curtis Hertel**  
**Committee: Transportation**

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**THE APPARENT PROBLEM:**

Michigan's many opportunities for outdoor recreational activities — whether its swimming, boating, camping, or even just touring — may explain the interest many people have in owning a "pickup camper," which is generally a non-motorized camping or recreational vehicle without wheels that rests on the back end of a pickup truck. Currently, there are about 25,000 of these types of vehicles owned and used by state citizens, according to a spokesman from an RV (recreational vehicle) group. These vehicles are not currently required to be registered or have a certificate of title under the Michigan Vehicle Code, although most manufacturers of this type of RV issue a type of serial number with every vehicle manufactured. This number can be useful to banks and other financial institutions to locate the original purchaser of an RV (when a purchase is financed) who defaults on making scheduled payments, and apparently is useful to law enforcement agencies for identifying stolen vehicles. Unfortunately, the number may be forgotten or a copy of it discarded by vehicle owners, making identification in many instances difficult, if not impossible. Some people feel requiring a certificate of title and registration for this type of RV could help in their identification by both law enforcement agencies and financial institutions.

**THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:**

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to require the owner of a pickup camper to obtain a registration and certificate of title from the secretary of state for his or her camper. (A "pickup camper" would be defined as a nonself-propelled recreational vehicle, "without wheels for road use," that was designed to rest its weight entirely on, and be attached to, a motor vehicle, and was primarily intended for use as temporary living quarters in connection with recreational, camping, or travel purposes.) Under the bill, a certificate of title would not be needed for a camper purchased before January 1, 1991 (which would be the bill's effective date), but all campers would be subject to registration after this date. Also, a camper manufactured for sale in Michigan after this date would have to have a manufacturer's identification number permanently affixed to its door.

**Registration Requirements, Fees.** A \$15 fee would be assessed to register a pickup camper under the bill. Upon receipt of the fee and a registration application, the secretary of state would issue the applicant a certificate of registration and a registration decal (in a form specified by the secretary of state) for the pickup camper. The registration decal assigned to a person would be permanently affixed to the camper as specified by the secretary of state. Also, the bill specifies that not more than \$5 of the assessed fee could be apportioned to the secretary of state as costs for its administrative duties under the bill.

**Vehicle Identification.** A pickup camper would have to have a distinct 17-character identification number which was acceptable to the secretary of state. The secretary of state could assign special ID numbers, and collect a \$10 fee for this as specified in the act for other vehicles, to a camper which did not have a vehicle ID number in compliance with the bill. A person would pay a \$5 fee to apply for a duplicate or replacement registration certificate, decal, plate, or other indicator of registration required under the act.

**Other provisions.** A pickup camper would have to be attached to a motor vehicle in a manner so that the registration plate of the motor vehicle was clearly visible. Except for a moped registration emblem, a decal registration emblem provided for in the act for all vehicles would not be transferable between a seller and a purchaser. Finally, a number of provisions relative to vehicles weighing more than 3,000 pounds, which pertain to various lamps and reflectors, would also apply to a camper.

MCL 257.210 et al.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

According to the Department of State, the bill would generate increased revenues of approximately \$637,500 from the one-time fees. This assumes there are about 25,000 of these vehicles in the state on the effective date of the bill (January 1, 1991), where a certificate of title would cost \$10.50 and registration, \$15. Of the \$637,500 generated by the bill, no more than \$125,000 ( $\$5 \times 25,000$ ) could be used by the department for administrative purposes related to the bill, while, according to a department spokesperson, the remaining revenue (\$512,500) would be used for general transportation needs. (1-31-90)

**ARGUMENTS:**

**For:**

The bill would require owners of pickup campers to obtain a certificate of title and registration for their vehicles after January 1, 1991, which could help both the police and financial institutions better identify an RV and its owner. While a manufacturer may issue a serial number to a pickup camper, the owner of the vehicle may not be aware of the number or may discard it accidentally. By requiring that all of these types of RVs be registered by the state, the bill would make it illegal to remove a registration number and would provide the public easy access to the number for ID purposes. Boats, trailer campers, and most other types of vehicles are now required to have a certificate of title and registration. Revenues generated by the registration and title fees would be used for various transportation needs, and by the Department of State to offset the costs of its administrative duties under the bill.

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***Against:***

The bill is unnecessary since most of these vehicles already have a serial number issued to them by their manufacturers. Requiring a state registration number and certificate of title would not necessarily help in identifying these vehicles either by the police or for repossession purposes by financial institutions. Other similar types of recreational vehicles (i.e. boats, trailer campers) that require registration are markedly different from pickup campers since these are hitched to, and pulled behind, a motor vehicle and can easily be unhitched and stolen. Pickup campers, on the other hand, rest on and are secured to a pickup truck and become part of the truck itself. A person wishing to steal one either must take the truck with it or lift the camper off the truck without being noticed.

***Against:***

The \$15 registration fee proposed in the bill is too high. According to a spokesperson for the Department of State, it would cost the department no more than \$5 per vehicle registration to cover its administrative duties under the bill. The additional \$10 registration fee (as well as the \$10.50 title fee) represent an additional tax on recreational vehicles which seems unjustified.

***POSITIONS:***

The Michigan Association of Bankers generally supports the concept of the bill. (1-31-90)

The Michigan Association of Recreational Vehicles and Campgrounds testified in support of the original version of the bill before the House Transportation Committee, but has not yet taken a position on Substitute H-1. (1-31-90)

Although the Department of State has not yet taken a formal position on Substitute H-1, a department spokesperson questioned the need for the bill. (1-31-90)

The Department of State Police has not yet taken a position on the bill. (1-31-90)