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HONORARY DIPLOMATIC CONSUL SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATES

House Bill 4458 as enrolled
Public Act 119 of 2000
Second Analysis (6-9-00)

Sponsor: Rep. John Pappageorge
House Committee: Transportation
**Senate Committee: Transportation and
Tourism**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

It is customary that some foreign countries confer upon American citizens the honorary title of special consul. The special consul then serves as a host when diplomats and envoys from that foreign land visit the United States to conduct the business of their corporations and government. Generally, the special consul accompanies the diplomats and envoys as they travel about our cities and state, and offers them the kind of practical assistance that helps to make their visits productive while they are in a land whose laws and customs may differ markedly from their own.

Although the title special consul is largely honorary and confers no special privileges or immunity from traffic and vehicle safety laws, some have argued that special consuls should be able to have their status recognized when they purchase a specialty license plate.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 4458 would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to permit a person who was designated an honorary consul by a diplomatic corps of a nation other than the United States that was recognized by the U.S. government and who was assigned or stationed in Michigan to apply to the secretary of state for a set of two special registration plates. Each special registration plate would have to have the words "honorary consul" inscribed on it.

Application for the set of two special registration plates would have to be on a form prescribed by the secretary of state, and be accompanied by proof that the applicant was designated as an honorary consul. The application also would have to be accompanied by payment of a \$35 consulate identification fee, which would have to be deposited in the state treasury and credited to the Michigan Transportation Fund. The fee

would have to be used first to defray the expenses of the secretary of state in issuing these plates.

Upon proper application and payment of the consulate identification fee, the secretary of state would have to issue a set of two special registration plates for each applicant for use on a passenger vehicle. The person issued the plates would have to be assessed the applicable tax under the code's provisions on vehicle registration fees. The special registration plates would expire on the vehicle owner's birthday.

The use of a special registration plate on a vehicle other than the vehicle for which the plate was issued, or by a person who did not qualify under the bill, would be a misdemeanor.

The bill specifies that the issuance of a set of two special registration plates to an applicant would not confer diplomatic status or diplomatic immunity on the applicant.

The bill would take effect October 1, 2000.

MCL 257.803q

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the Senate Fiscal Agency, the fiscal impact of the bill is indeterminate. The generated revenue under the bill would depend on the number of plates that were purchased. (5-3-00)

The House Fiscal Agency notes that the Department of State would incur additional administrative costs associated with the manufacture and sale of the new registration plate. It is assumed these additional costs would be covered by the appropriate fees, which would be deposited in the Michigan Transportation Fund.

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There are no data to indicate how many individuals would apply for such registration plates. (10-12-99)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

There are about 60 special consuls in Michigan, and this bill would acknowledge their status by allowing them to declare their titles on their license plates. Special consuls are those who serve as special hosts when diplomats and envoys from foreign lands visit the United States to conduct the business of their corporations and governments. Usually special consuls are American citizens whose countries of birth have conferred upon them the honorary title of special consul. Special consuls then serve their former countrymen as hosts when they travel here as envoys to the United States, helping them to make their way about our cities and the state, and offering them the kind of practical assistance that serves to make their visits productive. The bill would not confer any special privileges (such as parking privileges, or immunity from traffic and vehicle safety laws) upon those whose specialty license plates denote their special consul status.

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.