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COMMITTEE REPORT

February 3, 2009

**S. 126**

Introduced by Senators Sheheen and Elliott

S. Printed 2/3/09--S.

Read the first time January 13, 2009.

**THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION**

To whom was referred a Bill (S. 126) to amend Section 56‑3‑1910, Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, relating to the issuance of special license tags to certain handicapped persons, so as to define, etc., respectfully

**REPORT:**

That they have duly and carefully considered the same and recommend that the same do pass:

LAWRENCE K. GROOMS for Committee.

**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑1910, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE ISSUANCE OF SPECIAL LICENSE TAGS TO CERTAIN HANDICAPPED PERSONS, SO AS TO DEFINE THE TERM “HANDICAPPED”, DELETE THE TERM “LICENSE TAG” AND REPLACE IT WITH THE TERM “LICENSE PLATE”, AND TO REVISE THE CRITERIA FOR THE ISSUANCE OF THE LICENSE PLATE; TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑1950, RELATING TO THE DEFINITION OF THE TERM “HANDICAPPED”, AND THE REQUIREMENT THAT A LICENSED PHYSICIAN SHALL CERTIFY THAT A PERSON’S TOTAL AND PERMANENT DISABILITY SUBSTANTIALLY IMPAIRS HIS ABILITY TO WALK, SO AS TO REVISE THE DEFINITION OF THE TERM “HANDICAPPED” AND TO DELETE THE PROVISION RELATING TO THE CERTIFICATION OF A PERSON WHO IS TOTALLY AND PERMANENTLY DISABLED; TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑1960, RELATING TO FREE PARKING FOR HANDICAPPED PERSONS, AND THE ISSUANCE AND DISPLAY OF HANDICAPPED LICENSE PLATES AND PLACARDS, SO AS TO DELETE THE PROVISION THAT PROVIDES FOR THE ISSUANCE OF HANDICAPPED LICENSE PLATES, AND TO REVISE THE PROVISIONS REGARDING THE CONTENT, ISSUANCE PROCEDURE, AND DISPLAY OF HANDICAPPED PLACARDS; TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑1965, RELATING TO MUNICIPALITIES DESIGNATING PARKING SPACES FOR HANDICAPPED PERSONS, SO AS TO REVISE THE PROCEDURES THAT ALLOW A HANDICAPPED PERSON TO PARK IN METERED OR TIMED PARKING PLACES WITHOUT BEING SUBJECT TO PARKING FEES OR FINES; AND TO AMEND SECTION 56‑3‑2010, RELATING TO THE ISSUANCE OF PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATES, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT A PERSON WHO ALSO QUALIFIES IS QUALIFIED TO RECEIVE THIS LICENSE PLATE AND A HANDICAPPED LICENSE PLATE MAY BE ISSUED A PERSONALIZED LICENSE PLATE THAT INCLUDES A DECAL THAT CONTAINS THE INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL OF ACCESS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 56‑3‑1910 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 56‑3‑1910. (A) As used in this article, ‘handicapped’ means a person who has one or more of the following conditions:

(1) an inability to ordinarily walk one hundred feet nonstop without aggravating an existing medical condition, including the increase of pain;

(2) an inability to ordinarily walk without the use of, or assistance from a brace, cane, crutch, another person, prosthetic device, wheelchair, or other assistive device;

(3) a restriction by lung disease to the extent that the person’s forced expiratory volume for one second when measured by spirometry is less than one liter, or the arterial oxygen tension is less than sixty mm/hg on room air at rest;

(4) requires use of portable oxygen;

(5) a cardiac condition to the extent that the person’s functional limitations are classified in severity as Class III or Class IV according to standards established by the American Heart Association. If the person’s status improves to a higher level, for example as a result of bypass surgery or transplantation, he no longer meets this criteria;

(6) a substantial limitation in the ability to walk due to an arthritic, neurological, or orthopedic condition, for example, coordination problems and muscle spasticity due to conditions that include Parkinson’s disease, cerebral palsy, or multiple sclerosis; or

(7) blindness.

(B) Upon payment of the regular motor vehicle license fee, the department may issue a license ~~tag~~ plate with a special number or identification ~~indicating~~ and a picture identification that indicates that the ~~tag~~ license plate was issued to a person ~~(a) disabled by an impairment in the use of one or more limbs and required to use a wheelchair or (b) disabled by an impairment in mobility, but otherwise qualified for a driver’s license as determined by the department. Each application for the license must be accompanied by the certificate of a licensed physician as defined in Section 40‑47‑5 as to the permanency of limb impairment or as to the severity or the permanency of mobility impairment.~~ certified as permanently handicapped, but otherwise qualified to obtain a driver’s license. A license plate issued pursuant to this section must be accompanied by a certification form completed by a licensed physician.

(C) The department must develop a standardized certification form designed to capture criteria related information relating to persons considered handicapped. The form shall indicate whether the applicant meets one or more of the criteria, whether the condition is permanent or temporary, and if temporary, the expected duration.

(D) Forms must be completed by physicians licensed to practice in South Carolina as defined in Section 40‑47‑5.

(E) A person who falsifies information on an application form is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, may be fined not less than three hundred dollars, but not more than five hundred dollars or have his license suspended for up to thirty days, or both. An order of the court imposing the license suspension must be transmitted to the Department of Motor Vehicles in the manner provided in Section 56‑5‑2970.

(F) The special license plate authorized by this section also may be issued for a vehicle of special design and equipment designed to transport a disabled person who meets the requirements of this section if the vehicle is owned and titled in the name of the disabled person or in the name of a member of his immediate family.

(G) The special license ~~tag~~ plate authorized by this section may also be issued for a vehicle of special design and equipment designed to transport a disabled person who ~~meets~~ is certified as meeting the requirements of this section ~~if the vehicle is owned and titled in the name of the disabled person or in the name of a member of his immediate family or~~ for a vehicle used by an agency, organization, or facility ~~that is designed to transport a handicapped or disabled person if the vehicle is titled in the name of the agency, organization, or facility~~. Proof that the agency, organization, or facility transports a handicapped or disabled person must be in a manner prescribed by the department. A certificate from a licensed physician is not required to apply for the special license ~~tag~~ plate issued to the agency, organization, or facility.”

SECTION 2. Section 56‑3‑1950 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 56‑3‑1950. As used in this article~~:~~

~~(1)~~ ~~“Handicapped”~~ ‘handicapped’ means a person ~~who:~~

~~(a)~~ ~~has an obvious physical disability that impairs the ability to walk or requires the use of a wheelchair, braces, walkers, or crutches;~~

~~(b)~~ ~~has lost the use of one or both legs;~~

~~(c)~~ ~~suffers from lung disease to such an extent that he is unable to walk without the aid of a respirator;~~

~~(d)~~ ~~is disabled by an impairment in mobility; or~~

~~(e)~~ ~~is determined by the Social Security Administration or the Veterans Administration to be totally and permanently disabled.~~

~~(2)~~ ~~A licensed physician shall certify that the total and permanent disability substantially impairs the ability to walk, unless the applicant is an agency or organization complying with Section 56‑3‑1910.~~ as defined in Section 56‑3‑1910.”

SECTION 3. Section 56‑3‑1960 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 56‑3‑1960. ~~(1)~~ ~~Any person who is handicapped as defined in this article must be allowed to park in metered or timed parking places without being subject to parking fees or fines. This section has no application to those areas or during those times in which the stopping, parking, or standing of all vehicles is prohibited or which are reserved for special types of vehicles. As a condition to this privilege, a vehicle must display a distinguishing license plate which must be issued by the department, pursuant to this section, Section 56‑3‑1910, or Section 56‑3‑1110, for vehicles registered to the disabled person. The license plate must be issued for the usual fee applicable to standard license plates, except that a person who qualifies for a license plate under this section and also qualifies as a disabled veteran under Section 56‑3‑1110 must be issued the license plate provided for in this section free of charge. Application must be made on a form prescribed by the department and applicants may apply by mail. Each application must be accompanied by a certificate from a licensed physician as defined in Section 40‑47‑5 that the applicant is handicapped as defined in this article and that the handicap is permanent. No applicant may be denied a license plate if the completed application is accompanied by a certificate from a licensed physician as defined in Section 40‑47‑5 as required by this subsection.~~

~~(2)~~ ~~An agency, organization, or facility that transports a disabled or handicapped person or any person who is handicapped as defined in this article may apply to the department for issuance of a temporary or permanent distinguishing placard to be designed by the department. The department, if necessary, may design another distinguishing placard for an agency, organization, or facility that is eligible for a placard, however, all placards must be at least three inches by nine and one‑half inches in size and must hang from the rearview mirror of a vehicle or be displayed on the driver’s side dashboard when there is no hanging apparatus. The placard must be used on vehicles transporting the disabled person in lieu of the distinguishing license plate issued pursuant to subsection (1) of this section. When the placard is displayed on the driver’s side dashboard of a vehicle, all parking rights and privileges extended to vehicles displaying a distinguishing license plate issued pursuant to subsection (1) of this section are applicable to the vehicle. The department shall establish procedures for the issuance of distinguishing placards, and the procedures shall permit applicants to apply by mail. Each application must be accompanied by a certificate from a licensed physician as defined in Section 40‑47‑5 that the applicant is handicapped as defined in this article, except that a physician’s certificate is not required for applications by an agency, organization, or facility which must include sufficient documentation as may be prescribed by the department that the applying agency, organization, or facility transports handicapped or disabled persons. The physician shall state on the certificate whether the applicant is handicapped temporarily or permanently. If the applicant is temporarily handicapped, the physician shall state the length of time for which the applicant is temporarily handicapped. A placard issued for a temporary disability is valid only for the anticipated length of time of the disability specified by the physician in the certificate. No applicant may be denied a placard if the applicant follows the procedures established by the department and if the completed application is accompanied by a certificate from a licensed physician as defined in Section 40‑47‑5, as required by this subsection. The department shall charge a fee of one dollar a placard and may issue two placards to an individual applicant upon request. An agency, organization, or facility may receive a placard for each vehicle registered upon payment of the appropriate fees.~~

~~The permanent placards may be issued and renewed only for a maximum period of four years renewable on the owner’s birth date; however, placards issued to an agency, organization, or facility must be renewed every four years. The placards must be of a color as determined by the department which is easily recognizable by law enforcement personnel. The placard shall indicate on its face when it expires.~~

~~(3)~~ ~~A vehicle displaying an out‑of‑state handicapped license plate or placard or other evidence of handicap issued by the appropriate authority as determined by the department is entitled to the parking privileges provided for in this section.~~ (A) The department may issue placards that indicate that a person is qualified to use reserved handicapped parking spaces to persons certified as meeting the criteria for ‘handicapped’ as set forth in Section 56‑3‑1910, including persons with temporary handicapped conditions expected to last at least four months. The certification procedure shall adhere to the requirements set forth in Section 56‑3‑1910. At the time of qualification, applicants also must be issued a picture identification which indicates that they are qualified users of the placards.

(B) The placards authorized by this section also may be issued for a vehicle of special design and equipment designed to transport a disabled person who is certified as meeting the requirements of this section for a vehicle used by an agency, organization, or facility that is designed to transport a handicapped or disabled person if the vehicle is titled in the name of the agency, organization, or facility. Proof that the agency, organization, or facility transports a handicapped or disabled person must be in a manner prescribed by the department. A certificate from a licensed physician is not required to apply for placards issued to an agency, organization, or facility.

(C) The placards shall conform to specifications set forth in the standards established for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The design must incorporate a means for hanging the placard from a vehicle windshield rearview mirror, and:

(1) contain the international symbol of access;

(2) be color‑coded to reflect user status in the following manner:

(a) dark blue ‑ permanently disabled; and

(b) red ‑ temporarily disabled.

(D) Blue and red placards shall contain the qualified user’s sex and date of birth.

(E) Each placard shall contain the placard’s expiration date.

(F) When qualified users park in designated spaces, one of their placards must be displayed in the windshield of the vehicle by hanging it from the rearview mirror. In vehicles in which hanging may not be feasible, the placard must be placed on the side of the dashboard so that it is clearly visible through the windshield. This includes persons with handicapped or disabled veterans license plates. When more than one placard holder is transported in the same vehicle, only one placard needs to be displayed.

(G) When qualified users park in designated spaces, they must have their picture identification card available for inspection by law enforcement officers.

(H) Placards and identification cards for permanently disabled persons may be issued and renewed for a maximum period of four years and are renewable on the owner’s birth date. Placards issued to an agency, organization, or facility must be renewed every four years. The department may charge a fee of five dollars for an identification card.

(I) A vehicle displaying a valid out‑of‑state handicapped license plate or placard or other evidence of handicap issued by the appropriate authority as determined by the department is entitled to the parking privileges provided in this section. Handicapped individuals from other states seeking permanent residence in South Carolina have forty‑five days after becoming a resident to obtain South Carolina certification.

(J) A person who illegally duplicates, forges, or sells a handicapped placard or license plate is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be imprisoned for thirty days and fined not less than three hundred dollars and not more than five hundred dollars for each offense.

(K) A person who qualifies for a license plate under this section and also qualifies as a disabled veteran under Section 56‑3‑1110 must be issued the license plate provided for in this section free of charge.”

SECTION 4. Section 56‑3‑1965 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 56‑3‑1965. Those municipalities having marked parking spaces shall provide appropriately designated space or spaces reserved for the parking of handicapped persons. A person who is handicapped as defined in this article must be allowed to park in metered or timed parking places without being subject to parking fees or fines. This section does not apply to areas or during times in which the stopping, parking, or standing of all vehicles is prohibited or to areas which are reserved for special types of vehicles. A vehicle must display a distinguishing placard which must be issued by the department, pursuant to Section 56‑3‑1960 when parked in metered or timed parking places.”

SECTION 5. Section 56‑3‑2010 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding at the end:

“(C) If a person who qualifies for the special license plate issued under this section also qualifies for the handicapped license plate issued pursuant to Section 56‑3‑1960(1), then the license plate issued pursuant to this section also shall include a decal with the International Symbol of Access used on license plates issued pursuant to Section 56‑3‑1960(1). The decal can only be used if space is available to place the decal on the license plate without covering any identifying numbers or letters on the license plate.”

SECTION 6. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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