

**A report to the Iowa Legislature
Per Administrative Rules 761-401.18
Plates or validation sticker furnished – retained by owner – special plates**

Prepared by
Iowa Department of Transportation

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Overview. This report is submitted by the Iowa Department of Transportation, Motor Vehicle Division in compliance with Administrative Rule 761-401.18(3), *Discontinuance*, and discusses seven special registration plates established by the legislature in 2011. This rule requires the department to report to the legislature if any of the special registration plates subject to this rule have not been placed into production because the department has not received the minimum number of paid applications (250) required to produce the plates under Iowa Code section 321.34, subsections 20C, 25 and 26 as amended by 2011 Iowa Acts, House File 651, section 2. The department last submitted this report January 30, 2013, and is submitting this report again to advise the legislature that after four years, six of the seven plates have not yet been produced because the department has not received the minimum number of paid applications required to produce the plates.

Background. HF651 became effective July 1, 2011 for the purpose of “Providing for a special civil war sesquicentennial motor vehicle registration plate, special fallen peace officers plates, and special military combat plates, establishing fees, and making appropriations.” It amended section 321.34 to establish the following plates:

- Civil War Sesquicentennial (subsection 25)
- Combat Infantryman Badge (subsection 20C)
- Combat Action Badge (subsection 20C)
- Combat Action Ribbon (subsection 20C)
- Air Force Combat Action Medal (subsection 20C)
- Combat Medical Badge (subsection 20)
- Fallen Peace Officer (subsection 26)

The authorizing language for each of these plates provides that the department shall begin issuing the plate only if the department has received “two-hundred fifty orders for [the plate], accompanied by a start-up fee of twenty dollars per order.” See Iowa Code § 321.34, subsections 20, 25, and 26.

Information and applications for each of these plates was posted to the department’s website on July 12, 2011, and can be found at the following link:

<http://www.iowadot.gov/mvd/vehicleregistration/plates.htm>

Current Status. To this point, the only plate for which the department has received at least 250 paid applications and that has been put into production and issued is the Fallen Peace Officer plate, which went into production October 2, 2013. The following table shows the status of the remaining plates as of September 24, 2015:

Plate	Date Design Approved	Orders Received	Refunds Issued	Beneficiary of Fees Collected
Civil War Sesquicentennial	7/29/2011	24	2	Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs, to be used for the Iowa Battle Flag Project
Combat Infantryman Badge	7/6/2011	26	1	Veterans License Fee Fund
Combat Action Badge	7/6/2011	12	0	Veterans License Fee Fund
Combat Action Ribbon (US Coast Guard and US Marine/US Navy)	7/6/2011	7	0	Veterans License Fee Fund
Air Force Combat Action Medal	7/6/2011	0	0	Veterans License Fee Fund
Combat Medical Badge	7/6/2011	3	0	Veterans License Fee Fund

The fees collected to date have not been distributed and cannot until the respective plate is issued. Refunds have been provided to those customers who submitted a paid application but no longer want to wait for the plate to be issued.

Recommendations. The department recommends the legislature amend section 321.34 to strike subsection 25 and discontinue the civil war sesquicentennial plate, upon which the department will refund all fees paid that have not already been refunded at the request of the customer. There does not appear to be sufficient current interest in this plate to warrant its production, and there is no likelihood that interest or applications will increase now that the sesquicentennial of the civil war has passed.

It does not appear that the combat plates suffer from lack of interest as much as lack of eligible applicants – only persons awarded these medals are eligible for the respective plates, and it is not clear to the department that a pool of eligible persons sufficient to generate 250 paid applications resides within the state. If the legislature still wishes to honor persons awarded these medals through a special registration plate, the department recommends the legislature amend section 321.34, subsection 20C to strike that portion of the subsection that prohibits the department from issuing the plates until it has received 250 paid applications, at which point the department will put the plates into production and issue plates to those persons who have a paid order pending. If the legislature prefers to discontinue the plates, the legislature may simply strike subsection 20C, upon which the department would again refund all fees paid that have not already been refunded at the request of the customer.