

# Sen. Marklein: Marklein Bill to waive fee for EMS license plates heard today

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MADISON – State Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) testified with Boscobel Volunteer Fireman and First Responder, Brent Brown, before the Senate Committee on Transportation & Veterans Affairs. Senate Bill (SB) 360 waives the special registration license plate fee for fire fighter, rescue squad, emergency medical technician (EMTs) and first responder license plates.

“Brent sent me an email last spring to ask if we could consider waiving the fee for special license plates that some emergency medical service (EMS) members select for their personal vehicles,” Marklein said. “Unlike other specialty license plates, that raise funds and awareness for non-profit organizations and causes, the license plates included in Senate Bill 360 serve a role in public safety. They indicate that help is on the way.”

“In rural areas of our state, volunteer firefighters, emergency medical technicians and first responders are often the first, and sometimes only, trained personnel to arrive to emergency scenes. Volunteers are often called into action in their personal vehicles. These license plates help identify first responders to those involved in accidents, police officers or other emergency personnel responding from other neighboring fire stations.”

“With 70% of firefighters and EMTs being volunteers, there are many times that we show up on an emergency scene where we’re parking against traffic and parking in odd ways,” Brown said, “That plate identifies me going through traffic and at the

scene. We are America's first responders. We're the ones who are responding to your calls for help."

The Department of Transportation (DOT) requires EMS license plates be exchanged for regular license plates when an individual retires from service. Under the current system for these license plates, emergency responders are being charged \$15 a year to "rent" their license plate so they can volunteer for their communities. The fiscal estimate for this bill estimates the cost to the state would be \$10,500 per year.

Other specialty license plates do not carry a return requirement. People are free to keep their license plates when they are done using them. For instance you can hang your Packers or Brewers license plate in your garage or in your basement if you choose not to renew the plate the next year.

"This is a small cost to make for public safety and a big thank you to all the emergency personnel that respond to emergencies around our state on a daily basis," Marklein said.

SB 360 was co-authored by Representative John Spiros (R-Marshfield). Assembly Bill (AB) 443 is the companion bill in the Assembly. SB 360 now awaits an Executive Session vote in the Senate Committee on Transportation & Veterans Affairs. AB 443 has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Transportation.