

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1607
By: Metcalf
Transportation
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas statute currently requires all vehicles operated on public highways to display two license plates. The bill author informed the committee that this may pose an issue to some drivers, as certain modern vehicles are manufactured and sold without a spot on the front bumper on which to affix a license plate, and drivers of these vehicles must then modify their vehicles, sometimes with damaging consequences, to avoid receiving a citation. H.B. 1607 seeks to address this issue while maintaining the requirement that a vehicle display two forms of identification by authorizing the owner of a vehicle that lacks an exterior feature on which a front license plate may be fastened to display only a rear license plate along with a license plate windshield insignia issued by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill expressly does one or more of the following: creates a criminal offense, increases the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or changes the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles in SECTION 2 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1607 amends the Transportation Code to require the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) to issue the following to an applicant for motor vehicle registration of a passenger car or light truck on payment of the respective fee:

- a set of two license plates; and
- a license plate windshield insignia, if the applicant applies for the insignia in the form and manner prescribed by TxDMV and the applicant's passenger car or light truck is not equipped by the manufacturer with an exterior front feature to which a license plate may be fastened without drilling through the exterior of the vehicle.

The bill requires rules adopted by the board of TxDMV regarding the placement of license plates for a motor vehicle, road tractor, motorcycle, trailer, or semitrailer to authorize a passenger car or light truck to display only a rear license plate if the motor vehicle is not equipped by the manufacturer with such an exterior front feature and to require such a vehicle that displays only a rear license plate to display a license plate windshield insignia.

H.B. 1607 authorizes TxDMV by rule to do the following:

- prescribe the manner and form of an application for a license plate windshield insignia;
- establish a reasonable fee for a license plate windshield insignia in an amount necessary to cover the costs of administration; and

- determine the information and documentation required to demonstrate eligibility for a license plate windshield insignia.

The bill requires TxDMV by rule to prescribe the form of the license plate windshield insignia and the manner in which the insignia must be displayed and requires such a rule prescribing the form to require that an insignia show the same information that is required to be shown on the license plate issued for the vehicle and be displayed in the interior of the vehicle's front windshield.

H.B. 1607 requires the operator of a passenger car or light truck that displays a license plate windshield insignia and only a rear license plate to have in the operator's possession while operating the vehicle the unmounted license plate issued for the vehicle and to produce the unmounted license plate for inspection at the request of a peace officer. The bill creates a misdemeanor offense punishable by a maximum fine of \$200 for a person operating on a public highway a passenger car or light truck that displays a license plate windshield insignia and only a rear license plate while either of the following conditions occur:

- the unmounted license plate issued for the vehicle is not in the person's possession; or
- the person fails to produce for inspection, on the request of a peace officer, the unmounted license plate issued for the vehicle.

The bill authorizes a court to dismiss a charge for such an offense if the defendant produces in court the unmounted license plate issued for the vehicle and pays a reimbursement fee not to exceed \$10. The bill prohibits a peace officer from stopping a motor vehicle or detaining the operator of a motor vehicle solely to enforce this offense if the vehicle displays a valid license plate windshield insignia and complies with TxDMV rules regarding the placement of the insignia.

H.B. 1607 revises the conduct constituting the offense for operating a motor vehicle without displaying a valid license plate on a public highway during a registration period by applying the conduct to a person operating any vehicle that does not display all assigned license plates and any requisite license plate windshield insignia instead of to a person operating a motor vehicle without displaying two valid license plates on a public highway during a registration period.

H.B. 1607 applies only to an offense committed on or after the bill's effective date. An offense committed before the bill's effective date is governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. For these purposes, an offense was committed before the bill's effective date if any element of the offense occurred before that date.

H.B. 1607 repeals Section 504.943(b), Transportation Code.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.