



TREIG E. PRONSCHINSKE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 92nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
MAJORITY SERGEANT AT ARMS

Testimony on Senate Bill 617

Chairman Tomczyk and members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government, I want to thank you for your time and consideration of Senate Bill 617 today.

Senate Bill 617 would require the Department of Transportation to issue specific decals or registration plates to electric vehicles. Electric vehicles most commonly use nickel-metal hydride and lithium-ion batteries. These specific batteries require a very different response from emergency personnel.

These specific types of batteries can lead to electric shock, thermal runaway, battery ignition, and various other hazardous situations that can leave the passengers involved in the crash and the people responding to the crash in a dangerous situation. First responders, such as firefighters and paramedics need to know how to respond to the crash and without knowing it is an electric vehicle, this hampers their ability to do their job well.

There has been a continual and steady increase of electric cars on Wisconsin roads so it is crucial that we give our first responders every chance to be successful when something bad, like a crash, happens. These emergency personnel need to be prepared for whatever situation they are coming into and this bill would help with that.

I want to make sure to point out that this legislation would use the \$16,000 already allocated in the budget to cover the costs of these license plate stickers.

Senator James and I have both been first responders and we have both come up to crashes and accidents where it would have been wonderful to know what you're getting into. Knowing the type of car and situation you are about to enter will correlate with a more prepared first responder response and I hope that members on this committee can see it the same way we do.

With that being said, I, along with Senator James, look forward to questions, comments, or thoughts the committee might have. Thank you.



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**Testimony of Joel Nilsestuen, Assistant Deputy Secretary
Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
Public Hearing - January 17, 2024**

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk and committee members for the opportunity to testify for information only regarding Senate Bill 617 on behalf of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

Under this bill, the Department of Transportation must issue to registrants of hybrid and nonhybrid electric motor vehicles distinctive registration plates or decals for display on license plates that identify the vehicles as electric vehicles (EV).

Under current law, hybrid electric vehicles and nonhybrid electric vehicles are already required to bear decals indicating the vehicle is an electric vehicle. DMV is in the process of implementing the new requirement. The requirements of existing law appear to satisfy the requirements of SB617. However, the Department understands the stated goal of the proposal is for distinctive, physical EV specific plates to be phased in using the 10-year license plate replacement protocol already in place.

Under the proposal, the license plate indicator is required for all vehicles that operate at greater than 50 volts. DMV does not have access to consistent data regarding the voltage of Hybrid or Electric Vehicles. DMV would not be able to accurately administer the proposal as drafted.

The proposal is silent how DMV would meet the EV identification requirements on affected license plates. The implementation strategy would directly affect the cost to the department.

- **Stacked letters:** Many current license plates already use stacked letters, which are required to be part of the license plate number. A second set of EV stacked letters would go against American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) standards.

- **EV indication on the sheeting:** License plates are manufactured and stocked in advance of being assigned to a vehicle. Without knowing the fuel type of the eventual vehicle, this solution would effectively double the number of license plate types DMV procures from the Bureau of Correctional Enterprises and would double the inventory levels for roughly 1,100 DMV and authorized third party partner locations. This would increase both cost and complexity to the license plate fulfillment process.



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**Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
January 17, 2024
Testimony on Senate Bill 617**

Good morning, Chair Tomczyk and committee members:

My name is Rob Richard and I'm the Vice President of Government Relations and External Affairs for the Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in favor of Senate Bill 617, relating to indicia of registration for electric vehicles. I appreciate Sen. Jesse James and Rep. Treig Pronschinske authoring this legislation and all who have signed on as co-sponsors.

WECA's 24 electric distribution cooperative members serve more than 279,067 farms, residences, and businesses in the state. Dairyland Power Cooperative, also a member, is a generation and transmission cooperative that provides power to 24 electric distribution cooperatives and 17 municipal utilities in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. Nearly one out of every 10 electric consumers in Wisconsin is an electric cooperative member.

For the last two years, WECA's legislative and regulatory committee has supported the idea of EV license plates. Senators who represent electric cooperative service territory may recall this topic coming up with our cooperative members when they visited your offices for our Education and Lobby Days event. After a lot of discussion and reaching out to legislators, stakeholders, WisDOT, and others we finally have Senate Bill 617 to support.

WECA has some cooperative members that are really engaged in the EV issue. One is Nate Boettcher, CEO of Pierce Pepin Electric Cooperative, who has helped create a national EV network of cooperatives called CHARGE <http://charge.coop/>. Many in the electric cooperative world believe that knowing who is driving EVs will allow them to educate EV owners about the best time of use to help drivers save money and allow utilities to better manage load.

However, more importantly, several states have created EV plates that have largely been promoted as one way to help first responders quickly identify an electric vehicle when coming upon an accident scene. Many of our cooperatives have hosted EV safety programs by Mike Klimkosky from EVSafe.org based out of Mequon. His organization has put on safety seminars for first responders all over the state and Midwest. He told me this is one more tool first responders can use to identify an EV. He also said the towing industry was a powerful lobby to get the EV plate in IL. As you can imagine there are significant safety protocols when it comes to cutting open, moving and/or extinguishing an EV.

I would like to offer a little background as to how we got here. WECA had asked the Governor's office to include language in his 2023-24 biennial budget that would create an EV license plate. When his budget was introduced, he decided to create a sticker/decal instead. The Legislature approved the stickers but

also included a one-time registration fee of \$1. The Governor partially vetoed the \$1 fee out of the provision.

During the budget process WECA sought language to create a plate instead of the identification sticker but our efforts failed. To the best of my knowledge, no organization or group publicly supported the sticker/decals provision. While the sticker is better than nothing, we don't see it being as effective as stamped lettering.

Budget Provision:

IDENTIFICATION STICKER FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Governor/Joint Finance: Provide \$10,000 in 2023-24 and \$6,000 in 2024-25 to the Division of Motor Vehicles general operations appropriation to issue identification stickers for electric and hybrid-electric vehicles. Require that DOT issue a decal for each electric and hybrid-electric vehicle in the state that identifies the vehicle as electric. Require that the decals must be displayed on the front and rear registration plates of the vehicle, and establish a one-time registration fee of \$1 for issuance of the decals. Estimate revenues to the transportation fund from the decal fee of \$11,000 SEG-Rev in 2023-24 and \$8,000 SEG-Rev in 2024-25.

The budget provision was accounted for in the drafting of Senate Bill 617. Under this legislation, all existing EVs will receive the decal until they are required by DOT to receive new plates. If/when this legislation takes effect, all new EV registrations will be required to get the EV plate. The legislation gives DOT the ability to freely design the plate, but I am hopeful that they might lean towards a design like this that incorporates stacked, stamped lettering of "E" and "V" to the right. This is a common design feature with many other Wisconsin plates.



One of the reasons I believe the decal/sticker won't be as effective as stamped lettering is the lack of space on the plate. Whether people use license plate frames, or have specialized plates, the lack of space on a plate should be a concern.





Chair Tomczyk and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to speak in favor of Senate Bill 617. We ask that you please support this legislation and expedite an executive session so it can get to the floor for a vote.

Examples of EV plates from other states:



Passenger



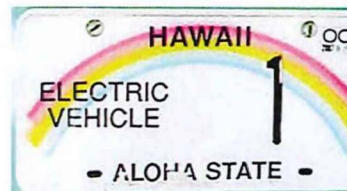
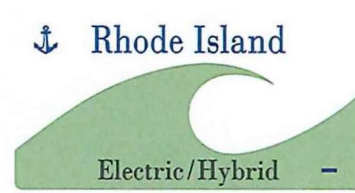
Passenger Personalized



Motorcycle



Motorcycle Personalized





Wisconsin Towing Association

A Division of the Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association

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Lanser Garage and Towing

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SECRETARY
Dan Johnson
WMCA/WTA

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 617 Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government January 17, 2024

Dear Chairman Tomczyk and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Wisconsin Towing Association, please accept this support testimony for Senate Bill 617, relating to indicia of registration for electric vehicles. Senator James and Representative Pronschinske have authored the legislation and we thank both of them, along with the many co-sponsors who support the bill.

Towing and recovery is a dangerous occupation. Each year in the United States, a tow truck operator is killed every six days while performing his or her duties assisting those in need. Tow operators are professionally trained individuals who take great care to protect themselves, and more importantly, protect those they assist on the side of the road. While they understand the hazards that come with the occupation, a new hazard has emerged, one which may create additional problems in the towing and recovery industry - electric vehicles.

In January of 2021, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued an alarming report regarding electric vehicle and the dangers posed by high voltage, lithium-ion batteries. The report specifically noted the risks involved for towing and recovery operators, and it is those risks that necessitate legislation indicating a vehicle as an electric vehicle.

According to the NTSB, fires in electric vehicles powered by high-voltage lithium-ion batteries pose the risk of electric shock to responders from exposure to the high-voltage components of a damaged lithium-ion battery. Further, damaged cells in the battery can experience uncontrolled increases in temperature and pressure, which can lead to battery reignition.

While recovering an electric vehicle may be problematic, storing such a vehicle may also be a problem. In fact, some electric vehicle manufacturers recommend storing an electric vehicle with a damaged high-voltage lithium-ion battery inside a 50-foot "clear area" to avoid any potential fire from spreading to other vehicles. However, the NTSB finds that may be infeasible at towing storage yards due to limited space.

Last year, the Wisconsin Towing Association hosted three seminars focused on electric vehicles. While the participants gained a great deal of information on how best to handle such recoveries, some have decided to avoid recovering electric vehicles altogether based on the information they received. For them, the risks are too great. That is why this legislation is necessary to clearly indicate the vehicle as an electric vehicle and allow tow operators to decide if recovering, towing and storing the vehicle is in their best safety interests.

The men and women of the Wisconsin Towing Association appreciate the review of this important legislation by the Committee and hope it will lend its support to passage.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Johnson
Division Administrator
Wisconsin Towing Association
562 Grand Canyon Drive
Madison, WI 53719



Michael Klimkosky
7111 W. Overlook Ct.
Mequon, WI 53092

January 15, 2024

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government,

I am writing to express my wholehearted support for Senate Bill 617, which proposes the implementation of specially embossed plates for electric vehicles to aid first responders during roadway incidents. As our society transitions towards a more sustainable future with increased adoption of electric vehicles, it is crucial to ensure the safety of both drivers and emergency response teams. SB 617 addresses this concern by introducing a thoughtful solution that enhances the efficiency of first responders in recognizing and dealing with incidents involving electric vehicles.

The introduction of specially embossed plates for electric vehicles is a commendable step towards mitigating potential challenges faced by first responders. During emergency situations, quick and accurate identification of vehicle types is paramount, and these designated plates would significantly aid in a swift and safe response of emergency personnel. This proactive approach aligns with our collective responsibility to adapt to emerging technologies and ensure basic safety measures are in place to handle any unforeseen circumstances effectively.

Moreover, SB 617 not only contributes to the safety of first responders but also fosters a sense of confidence and security among electric vehicle owners. By implementing this measure, the legislation demonstrates a commitment to the seamless integration of electric vehicles into our transportation system. I believe that this bill strikes a well-balanced approach that promotes safety, sustainability, and the continued growth of the electric vehicle market. I urge the Transportation Committee to consider the positive impact that SB 617 can have on our communities across Wisconsin and support its passage for the benefit of all stakeholders involved.

Sincerely,

Michael Klimkosky

President, EVsafe