

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

The *Gold Star* license plate signifies that a family member has died while serving honorably in active military service, whether of combat-related causes or otherwise. The 2009 Legislature created the Gold Star license plate to honor the sacrifice of such deceased service members, with eligibility for the plate being limited to the surviving spouse and parents of the deceased service member. This bill would expand eligibility for the Gold Star license plate to include the surviving children and siblings of the deceased service member. It would also establish that for purposes of this license plate an eligibility relationship may be established by birth or adoption.

Gold Star license plates are issued free of charge to eligible persons, with the cost of production (about \$10 per set of plates) being paid with funding from the Support our Troops account (which itself is funded largely from the sale of the Support our Troops license plate, for which the license holder must pay a minimum of \$30 per year). It continues to be the case under the bill that an applicant for the Gold Star license plate must comply with all laws relating to the registration and licensing of motor vehicles and drivers.

Background:

During the early days of World War I, a Blue Star Banner was used to signify, through display on a window or door, that a family member was serving in the United States military. As the war progressed and service members were killed in combat or training or died of accident or disease, surviving family members began substituting a Gold Star to signify the supreme sacrifice of their service member.

Out of this tradition grew an organization named the *American Gold Star Mothers*. This organization was legally incorporated in 1928 and was congressionally chartered in 1984.

More recently, a broader movement of *Gold Star Families* has evolved to include other family members, as well.