

Senate Transportation Committee

Vivian Hall 271-3091

HB 1483-FN, creating a motor vehicle license plate for amateur radio operators.

Hearing Date: April 21, 2026

Time Opened: 2:05 p.m.

Time Closed: 2:16 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Fenton, Ricciardi, McConkey and Ward

Members of the Committee Absent : Senator Prentiss

Bill Analysis: This bill authorizes the creation of vanity license plates and decals that identify amateur radio operators by their FCC call signs or a lightning bolt symbol.

Sponsors:
Rep. Ulery

Who supports the bill: Richard Kahn.

Who opposes the bill: None.

Who is neutral on the bill: Representative Thomas Walsh, Merrimack 10; and Jennifer O'Leary, Division of Motor Vehicles.

Summary of testimony presented:

Senator McConkey, Senate District 8

- Sen. McConkey introduced the bill on behalf of the sponsor.
- He spoke about his family who were radio operators.
- The communication towers with the state police are always going to work.
- He said that several other states have this license plate.

Richard Kahn

- Mr. Kahn described the many behind-the-scenes services amateur radio operators provide, especially during emergencies.
- He shared experiences from events like Hurricane Gloria and Hurricane Katrina, explaining how operators handle urgent communications, assist with

emergency responses, and support efforts such as Civil Air Patrol simulations of downed aircraft.

- He also mentioned activities like Field Day, noting it was an emergency preparedness exercise, and mentioned his role as a volunteer examiner, emphasizing that this work was done at no cost.
- He argued that the proposed recognition, such as a special plate or symbol, would have only a negligible fiscal impact, and added that he would still pay the same vanity plate fee as others.
- He emphasized the value of amateur radio operators' public service and the minimal cost of acknowledging their contributions.

Jennifer O'Leary, Division of Motor Vehicles

- **Ms. O'Leary** said that when we talk about decals in the laws, this references our decal plates.
- It was her understanding that the intent of the language was to design a new plate locating that lightning bolt.
- It would indicate an individual will have a decal.

Sen. McConkey asked if it would be possible to draft an amendment to help to switch this from being a decal to a plate, and if that be disagreeable to the DMV.

Ms. O'Leary said no. This is written to reflect a new decal plate.

Sen. McConkey asked if she would mind if we got together to work on language.

Ms. O'Leary said sure.

Representative Thomas Walsh, Merrimack District 10

- Rep. Walsh said that the issue raised by the department might or might not require an amendment, noting that it appeared to be an entirely new section.
- He pointed out that, starting on line three, the language did not mention decals.
- He also discussed the question of decals versus plates, explaining that the Transportation Committee had previously opposed plates due to their cost.
- He added that with the Division of Motor Vehicles now authorized to use a new process for producing plates, the cost should decrease significantly.