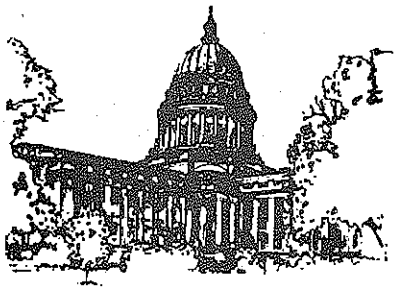
MARY
WILLIAMS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 87TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Committees: Property Rights (Chair) · Tourism, Recreation and State Properties (Vice Chair) · Natural Resources · Agriculture Forestry · Rural Economic Development · Rules Committee



April 3, 2007

Madame Chair, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill, AB 88.

This bill will allow first responders to obtain special distinguishing license plates under the same statutory designation that EMTs currently have.

In my district, there are many rural communities that are miles away from EMTs or ambulances. Fortunately, we have first responders who are trained volunteers that often provide the services paid EMTs otherwise would. First responders arrive to the scene first to provide life saving services in the event of a car accident, fire, or medical emergency at a home. They must go through over 50 hours of classroom training and take practical and written tests to become certified by the State of Wisconsin. Some are even nationally registered to do their job anywhere in the U.S.

Unfortunately, confusion often arises when they show up at the scene with nothing to identify them other than clothing and a plastic border to attach to the front license plate. Constituents in my district who are first responders contacted me with the idea for this bill. They believe that a specialized license plate similar to the one EMTs or Firefighters have would get rid of this unnecessary confusion and make first responders more visible.

Last session, I introduced a similar piece of legislation, AB 431, which created an entire new category for first responders. It required an appropriation from the transportation budget of $11,800, and although it passed the Transportation Committee unanimously and the Joint Finance Committee on a 15-1 vote late last session, it was not taken up before session ended.

When redrafting the bill this year, working with the DOT, we realized we could eliminate the need for a monetary appropriation by grouping first responders in with EMTs rather than creating an entirely new group for first responders. However, we wanted to make sure that EMTs would not feel that we were encroaching on their territory because EMTs and first responders are not entirely the same. To do this, DOT has agreed to work with the Wisconsin Emergency Medical Services Association when determining the wording on the sticker for the plate. It has been proposed to use the words, "Emergency Medical Technicians and First Responders," "Emergency Medical Service Providers," or something to that effect.

Those details do not need to be written into this bill. The bill will allow first responders to obtain specialized license plates without increasing costs for the state of WI. It will remove unnecessary confusion when first responders show up at the scene of an accident. It is a win-win bill that I hope you will support.

Thank you.

Mary

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