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OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

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S.B. 280
136th General Assembly

Bill Analysis

Version: As Introduced

Primary Sponsor: Sen. Johnson

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SUMMARY

- Allows the owner of a high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (colloquially a “Humvee”) that was manufactured for military purposes to register the vehicle as a historical motor vehicle, regardless of the vehicle’s age, if the Humvee is owned solely as a collector’s item and for participation club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, and similar uses.
- Prohibits operation of a Humvee for general transportation; however, allows a Humvee owner to operate the Humvee on public roads and highways for purposes of club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, and to and from a vehicle maintenance location.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Humvees as historical motor vehicles

The bill allows a person who owns a high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (or “Humvee”) that was manufactured for military purposes, regardless of the vehicle’s age, to register the vehicle as a historical motor vehicle if the Humvee is owned solely as a collector’s item and for participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, and similar uses.

Under current law, a “historical motor vehicle” is any motor vehicle owned solely as a collector’s item for participation in club activities, exhibitions, tours, parades, and similar uses, is not used for general transportation, *and is over 25 years old*. A historical motor vehicle, including a Humvee under the bill, may only be operated on public roads and highways for those limited purposes and to go to and from a location where maintenance is performed on the vehicle.¹

¹ R.C. 4501.01(G) and 4503.181(A).

Registration

To register a Humvee as a historical motor vehicle, an owner must pay a \$10 fee in lieu of the annual license tax normally required at registration. Additionally, the owner must execute an affidavit that specifies both of the following:

1. The owner will not operate the vehicle for general transportation and will only operate it for the limited historical vehicle purposes (i.e., exhibitions, parades, etc.).
2. The vehicle has been inspected and found safe to operate on the public roads and highways in Ohio.²

It is unclear whether a Humvee owner can satisfy the second prong of the above affidavit. Historical vehicles must comply with the federal emissions and manufacturing standards that were required of vehicles at the time of manufacture for safe use on public roads and highways and are exempt from any standards adopted after their date of manufacture. In contrast, military surplus vehicles (like Humvees) were never subject to any of those same standards.³

When Humvees are retired from military service and subsequently purchased, the federal government issues the new owner a federal certificate of title that clearly states in red letters at the top of the title “OFF-ROAD USE ONLY.” Thus, buyers are aware upon purchase that Humvees are prohibited from use on public roads.⁴ Given the equipment exemptions for historical motor vehicles under current law and the lack of a direct requirement for Humvee owners to modify the vehicles to make them safe for road operation, it is uncertain what standards, if any, will be used to satisfy the second prong of the affidavit.

License plates or painted registration numbers

Motor vehicles that were originally manufactured for military purposes may have their assigned registration number painted on the front and rear of the vehicle, as an alternative to displaying a license plate. The number must be painted in a color that contrasts clearly with the color of the vehicle and must always be legible and visible. If the owner sells the vehicle, that registration number must be removed or obliterated so that the new owner can receive a new number (similar to a new owner receiving new license plates).⁵

Under current law, for nonmilitary historical vehicles, if the owner wants the vehicle to display a license plate from the same model year as the historical vehicle, the owner must also swear in the registration affidavit that the model year license plate provided by the owner is legible, serviceable, and a valid Ohio license plate.⁶ Alternatively, the owner can display a license

² R.C. 4503.181(B) and (C).

³ R.C. 4513.02, 4513.071, 4513.38, and 4513.41, not in the bill. Historical motor vehicles are generally exempt from vehicle equipment requirements that were not in place when the vehicle was originally manufactured.

⁴ 49 Code of Federal Regulations § 571.7.

⁵ R.C. 4503.181(D) and (E).

⁶ R.C. 4503.181(C).

plate issued by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles that displays, “Historical Vehicle – Ohio” and a unique registration number.⁷

After the initial registration, the owner of a historical vehicle does not need to renew the registration until the vehicle is transferred or sold to a new owner. At that time, a new registration is required for the vehicle. Additionally, if an owner wants to swap the type of license plate displayed on the vehicle, the owner must pay \$10 to update the registration but does not need to have the vehicle reinspected.⁸

HISTORY

Action	Date
Introduced	10-07-25

ANSB0280IN-136/ts

⁷ R.C. 4503.181(D).

⁸ R.C. 4503.181(E) and (F).