



Anthem credit on license plate proposed

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A bit of history might be displayed across the bottom of standard Maryland license plates beginning this fall, if Sen. Larry Haines, a Republican who represents District 5, which includes Carroll County and some portions of Baltimore County, has his way.

Haines has proposed legislation so that "Home of Our National Anthem" would grace all state license plates as a way to honor Maryland native Francis Scott Key's famous poem, written after watching the British bombard Fort McHenry in September 1814.

Haines, who presented Senate Bill 45 to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee, said 33 states have some type of motto or slogan on their standard plates.

Maryland is one of only five states that issue a standard registration plate displaying a state web site, according to the Department of Legislative Services for Maryland General Assembly.

Of the other 45 states, 12 have no motto, slogan, or Web site.

Maryland last displayed a slogan on its standard issue registration plates during the mid-1980s for the 350th anniversary of the state's founding as a colony, according to the department.

Haines said he hopes the motto on Maryland's plates would help preserve the state's place in the nation's history.

"I think that most everyone is familiar with our anthem," he said. "Maryland is the birthplace of our national anthem."

Haines said he believes now is the time to make the addition to state license plates, with the bicentennial of the War of 1812 just two years away. If the bill is enacted, all plates made starting Oct. 1 would bear the motto.

"I just believe it will keep history before the next generation," Haines said. "It's very, very important to keep history alive."

He said he had no problem with leaving the new motto off specialized plates, such as the popular agricultural and Chesapeake Bay plates.

Sen. Lisa Gladden, a Democrat who represents District 41 in Baltimore, suggested an amendment that would change the motto to "Birthplace of Our National Anthem," underscoring the fact the entire nation, not just Maryland, is home to the anthem.

Haines said he had no problem with that, even saying it might be more appropriate.

" 'Birthplace' might make it crowded, that's the only thing," Haines said, referring to the small space between the two bolt holes at the bottom of license plates.

"I'll be satisfied if it just went on the standard plate."