



Bulletin

2015-01B

MOTOR VEHICLE EXCISE EXEMPTIONS FOR VETERANS

(Supersedes Bulletin 2006-15B in part and any Inconsistent Prior Written Statements)

TO: Assessors

FROM: Kathleen Colleary, Chief, Bureau of Municipal Finance Law

DATE: January 2015

SUBJECT: Revised Registry of Motor Vehicle Procedure

This *Bulletin* informs assessors about a recent change in procedure made by the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) that will now allow certain veterans with service-connected disabilities to establish their eligibility for a motor vehicle excise exemption.

Eligible Service-connected Disabilities

To be eligible for a motor vehicle excise exemption, a veteran must, as documented by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, have actually lost, or have the permanent loss of use of, at least one foot or hand, or have permanent legal blindness in at least one eye, due to his or her military service. A veteran who does not have one of those specific disabilities can also qualify for an excise exemption if the RMV's Medical Advisory Board (MAB) has determined that the veteran is permanently disabled due to his or her military service. G.L. c. 60A, § 1.

RMV Determination of Permanent Disability

Until recently, RMV policy and practice was for the MAB to make the necessary determination of a permanent service-connected disability when a veteran applied for and was issued a disabled veteran (DV) plate. The veteran did not receive a letter or other notice that the MAB had made the required determination. Therefore, as a practical matter, the veteran had to have been issued a DV plate for the vehicle in order to establish he or she qualified for this exemption.

During 2014, however, the RMV changed its policy and procedure. The MAB is now issuing a letter that states it has determined that the individual is a veteran who has a permanent service-connected disability and is eligible for a DV plate. The veteran may then choose whether to be issued the DV plate. A sample of that letter is attached.

As a result of this change in procedure, a veteran will now be able to establish eligibility for the motor vehicle excise exemption by (1) providing the assessors with a copy of the MAB determination of permanent service-connected disability or (2) having a DV plate on the vehicle.

Unlike property tax exemptions, there is no fixed qualification date for motor vehicle excise exemptions. The taxpayer just needs to meet all the qualifying criteria during the excise calendar year. According to the RMV, the determination letter remains valid from the date of issuance. Therefore, any veteran who obtains a MAB determination letter or has a DV plate on his or her vehicle during any excise calendar year may obtain an exemption of that year's excise. Once the assessors have granted the exemption on this basis, they should retain the letter to document that the veteran qualifies for the exemption in subsequent years.

Example

The MAB issues a determination letter to the veteran dated December 1, 2014. The veteran decides not to obtain DV plates, but to retain the plates currently on the vehicle instead. The veteran can obtain a motor vehicle excise exemption **beginning** in excise calendar year 2014 by (1) applying to the assessors within 3 years of the date the 2014 excise on that vehicle was due, or 1 year of the date it was paid, if later, and (2) providing the assessors with a copy of the MAB determination letter.

Please retain this *Bulletin* for future reference in processing veteran motor vehicle excise exemptions.

If you have any questions, please contact the Bureau of Municipal Finance Law legal staff at 617-626-2400.

Date:

To:

Re: DV Plate Eligibility

Dear :

1. The Registrar has determined that you are eligible for a Disabled Veteran's Plate, (DV plate) based upon a finding that you qualify as a "Veteran" under M.G.L. Chapter 4, Section 7 and also upon a determination by the Registry's Medical Advisory Board (MAB), pursuant to its authority under M.G.L. Chapter 90 Section 8C, that you are "permanently disabled."

2. Such an approval by the Registrar also means that you meet the eligibility standards in M.G.L. Chapter 60A, Section 1 for an exemption from the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax. You need not, however, register your vehicle with DV plates (no fee) to be eligible for the excise tax exemption but may choose passenger plates (at no fee) for a passenger vehicle or pick-up truck. Chapter 60A states, in part:
"This exemption shall apply to not more than one motor vehicle owned and registered for the personal, non-commercial use of such veteran or person."

3. If you register your vehicle with passenger plates that require the payment of "special fees" under the RMVs most recent "Schedule of Fees," you will be subject to those fees. You will also be subject to registration fees and excise tax if you own additional vehicles.

4. If you wish to register your vehicle with the DV plate authorized for you, then:

- (i) Please obtain a completed registration application from your insurance company.
- (ii) Bring the application to your local Registry Branch along with the plates presently on the vehicle.
- (iii) **Your Disabled Veteran plates will be issued providing the vehicle is registered and titled in your name. If held in joint ownership, YOUR NAME MUST BE LISTED FIRST.**
- (iv) Your plates, MUST BE PICKED UP WITHIN 30 DAYS at the Registry Branch
you selected located in: MA.

Whether you do or do not register your vehicle with DV plates, in order to apply for the excise tax exemption you must do so through your municipal tax assessor. You will need to provide that office with a photocopy of this letter.

If you have any questions, please contact the Medical Affairs Branch Staff at (857) 368-8020.

Sincerely,
Medical Affairs Branch

sae SXXXXXXXX

DV plate applicant approval letter

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