Veto No. 1996-1

HB 2064 July 11, 1996

To the Honorable, the House of Representatives
of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

I am returning herewith, without my approval, House Bill 2064, Printer's No.3914, entitled "An act amending Titles 74 (Transportation) and 75 (Vehicles) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, providing for the designation of certain scenic byways; and providing for a special registration plate for submarine veterans, for a special youth hunter and angler education registration plate, for the Youth Hunter and Angler Education Fund and for expenditures from that fund, for the issuance of additional personal registration plates, for a special Children First registration plate, for payments to and grants from the Children's Trust Fund, for a special State-owned and State-related institution registration plate, for special library registration plates, for the State-owned and State-related institution scholarship funds, for a special Pennsylvania College of Technology registration plate, for the Pennsylvania College of Technology scholarship fund and for a Guardian of Liberty plate; and creating the Guardian of Liberty Memorial Fund."

The original purpose of House Bill 2064 was to create a special "youth hunter and angler" license plate to promote education programs for Pennsylvania youth. The design of the hunter and angler plate had been approved by the Pennsylvania State Police. The creation of this special plate by itself would not have created the administrative burdens which are outlined below. I generally support the issuance of a youth hunter and angler license plate; however, the large number of additional plates added to the bill in the final days of the legislative session creates an administrative and safety burden such that I have no choice other than to withhold my approval of House Bill 2064.

House Bill 2064 would create a total of twenty-four new specialized motor vehicle license plates for the following groups and organizations: Youth Hunter and Angler Education Board, Children's Trust Fund, Submarine Veterans, Pennsylvania State University, University of Pittsburgh, Temple University, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania College of Technology, Bloomsburg University, California University, Cheyney University, Clarion University, East Stroudsburg University, Edinboro University, Indiana University, Kutztown University, Lock Haven University, Mansfield University, Millersville University, Shippensburg University, Slippery Rock University, West Chester University, Guardian of Liberty Memorial and libraries.

While each of these groups makes a significant contribution to the Commonwealth, the number of plates available has created serious safety and fiscal, as well as constitutional, concerns.

These provisions create a total of twenty-two separate funds. The submarine veterans plate does not designate a recipient of the additional funds. The funds from the special library plate go to the library which solicited the designation.

The bill also provides for the personalization of several special vehicle registration plates when accompanied by an additional fee of $300; $150 would go to the fund organization linked to the plate; and $150 would go to the Department of Transportation. Costs to the Department of Transportation are expected to increase significantly. The vendor, Correctional Industries, cannot manufacture personalized plates for the number of special vehicle registration plates in the bill and will be required to make a substantial investment in technology and equipment in order to meet the demand for personalized special vehicle registration plates. The increased costs incurred, which cannot be determined at this time, will be passed on to the Department of Transportation.

Furthermore, specialty license plates are a serious concern for law enforcement. These plates impair readability and make it increasingly difficult for law enforcement officers and citizens to make good identifications of vehicles involved in the commission of serious crimes.

Finally, the creation of the special library registration plate and the submarine veterans plate creates a constitutional impediment to implementing House Bill 2064. Section 1364, which creates the special library plate, and section 1351.1, which creates the special submarine veterans plate, do not create a special fund to maintain the proceeds. Therefore, the fees would be deposited into the Motor License Fund. Section 11(a) of Article 8 of the Constitution of Pennsylvania prohibits motor vehicle registration fees, such as those used to purchase the special license plates, from being used for any purpose other than the construction, maintenance, repair of and safety on public highways and bridges. Requiring monies placed in the Motor License Fund to go directly to libraries violates section 11(a).

The Department of Transportation and the Pennsylvania State Police have developed standards under which a special license plate would be appropriate. In addition, we are reviewing the possibility of creating a special plate that could be placed on the front of a vehicle in addition to the official registration plate on the rear of the motor vehicle. These alternatives and standards should be reviewed and considered before the General Assembly continues to generate more and more special registration plates.

In summary, as a result of the cost, safety and constitutional concerns raised by the twenty-four new specialized license plates, I hereby withhold my signature from House Bill 2064, Printer's Number 3914.

THOMAS J. RIDGE