

Veto No. 2000-3

HB 1470

December 20, 2000

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

I am returning herewith, without my approval, House Bill 1470, Printer's No. 4234, entitled "An act amending Title 75 (Vehicles) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, adding and amending definitions; further providing for certificates of title; providing for salvage, theft and reconstructed vehicles; further providing for registration of vehicles, for registration plates, for registration violations and suspensions, for licensing of drivers, for comprehensive system for driver education and control, for driver's license violations, for driver's license compact, for commercial drivers, for required financial responsibility, for payments to special funds, for registration fees, for permits, for the Motor Vehicle Transaction Recovery Fund, for obedience to and effect of traffic laws, for traffic-control devices, for right-of-way, for special stops required, for stopping, standing and parking, for speed restrictions, for rights and duties of pedestrians, for depositing waste and other material on highway, property or water and for abandonment and stripping of vehicles; providing for restitution of property owners and for restriction on alcoholic beverages; further providing for accidents involving overturned vehicles, for serious traffic offenses, for accidents and accident reports, for equipment standards, for lighting equipment, for safety and antipollution equipment, for vehicles for transportation of school children, for equipment of authorized and emergency vehicles, for inspection requirements, for official inspection stations, for vehicle size, weight and load, for powers of the Department of Transportation and local authorities, for enforcement, for misuse of documents and plates, for tampering with odometers, for abandoned vehicles and cargos, for messenger service and for snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles; providing for motor carrier safety; further providing for liquid fuels and fuels tax refunds; conferring powers and duties on the Department of Health; and making repeals."

House Bill 1470 amends the Motor Vehicle Code. The original purpose of the bill was to change the grading of certain violations of the Public Utilities Code and to create the Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee Act. House Bill 1470 was amended to include a wide variety of amendments to the Vehicle Code. While the majority of the changes in the amendment would improve the administration of the Department of Transportation and promote the safe operation of vehicles on the Commonwealth's highways, the inclusion of various special registration plates and prohibition against the enactment or enforcement of size and weight restrictions by municipal governments compels me to withhold my approval of House Bill 1470.

Early in my administration, I agreed to sign a bill to create one additional special fund plate, the Youth Hunter and Angler Plate. However, the further proliferation of these special fund plates not only creates an additional administrative and financial burden on the Commonwealth but also diminishes the potential benefit of new and existing plates for the sponsoring organizations.

House Bill 1470 would create a total of five new specialized motor vehicle registration license plates. In addition to the Youth Hunter and Angler Plate, House Bill 1470 creates an animal protection plate, a cancer research plate, a Mothers Against Drunk Driving plate and the Kids First plate. While all of the groups associated with these plates make a significant contribution to the health and well-being of the citizens of the Commonwealth, the benefits of creating additional special fund plates for those groups are outweighed by the administrative and financial burdens associated with the establishment and maintenance of additional funds within the Treasury. In addition, the costs to the Department of Transportation relating to the design and personalization of these plates are expected to increase at a significant rate.

I have directed the Department of Transportation to develop language to allow a special organization plate that includes a pictorial display on the side of the plate. This language will allow the organization to have a distinctive picture for fundraising purposes. The organization would administer the application for the plates in the same manner as current special organization plates. The organization would also directly control the monies raised, relieving the Commonwealth of the administrative burden of maintaining special funds and distributing proceeds to various organizations. It is my hope that this language can be developed early in the next legislative session and will serve the fundraising goals of special fund plates without creating the problems associated with special fund plates.

Secondly, a provision in House Bill 1470 prohibits local officials from enacting any ordinance imposing weight and size restrictions on bridges and highways under their jurisdiction. Most restrictions on trucks in residential neighborhoods are local in origin. These municipal ordinances are used by local governments to help maintain the quality of life in our local communities. While I believe the result of this provision was unintended, the language could render new and existing ordinances unenforceable.

In summary, the administrative burden and cost created by the five new specialized registration plates and the prohibition on local control of traffic in our communities cause me to withhold my signature from House Bill 1470, Printer's Number 4234.

THOMAS J. RIDGE