



To: Senate Transportation Committee

From: Vice-Mayor Bryan Frye (District 5)
Wichita City Council

Date: Thursday, March 8, 2018

Re: SB273 Wichita Flag License Plate Bill – “Plates for Parks”

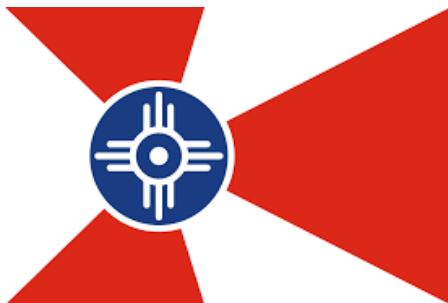
Chairman Mike Peterson, Vice-Chair John Doll, Ranking Minority Member Pat Pettey, and honored members of the Senate Transportation Committee:

I come before you today representing the Wichita City Council, and all of our citizens who have recently embraced the Wichita flag as a symbol of our city. There is growing excitement about Wichita as a vibrant and welcoming city. The basic idea behind this bill is to create an affinity license plate with the Wichita flag, with any proceeds to be used by the Wichita Parks Foundation to improve Wichita parks.

Even though the Wichita flag has been in place since the 1930's, it is seeing a unique grassroots resurgence now. Since the design is still in the public domain with no copyright, local artists and entrepreneurs have adopted its image for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of creative works – from signs and buttons, to mugs and murals and various apparel – even socks!

Background

One of the best sources for historical background about the flag and its design is the Wichita Flag page on Wikipedia. This page includes an excellent history of the flag's design, including what the artist intended for each symbol included in the flag.



“Wichita's official city flag was adopted in 1937. Designed by a local artist from South Wichita Cecil McAlister, it represents freedom, happiness, contentment and home. The blue sun in the center represents happiness and contentment. The Native American symbol for permanent 'home' is stitched on the blue sun.”

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_Wichita,_Kansas

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Working with officials in Topeka, Sedgwick County and groups who already have affinity plates, we determined several key steps were necessary.

- Create a compelling design that meets license plate requirements;
- Get support from Kansas legislators to create the bill authorizing the plates;
- Locate start-up funding, program partners & beneficiary;
- Demonstrate public demand.

First step – Because artist Cecil McAlister already did the heavy lifting, it became a matter of incorporating his outstanding design into state specifications. Many thanks to City of Wichita graphic designer Steve Cooper for his talented work.

Second – I and members of the city’s lobbying team started talks with area legislators to gain bi-partisan support for the bill. Senator Oletha Faust-Goudeau came aboard quickly as did Senator Mike Petersen, and we are very grateful.

With start-up costs estimated to be as high as \$20,000, our third step was to identify how this was going to work financially and who was going to manage it. During my time on the park board, the Wichita Parks Foundation was created to enhance the quality of our parks system with partnerships & relationships. Knowing this, we decided a small portion of the Hyatt sales proceeds dedicated to Pracht Wetlands could provide the necessary funding as long as the Parks Foundation paid it back using the royalty fees collected from each plate.

We knew we needed to demonstrate to the Kansas legislature that there would be enough demand for a Wichita flag license plate. We needed to collect a minimum of 500 commitments to purchase. We began the public outreach on October 12, and within 24 hours we had more than enough. The “Plates for Parks” campaign has been shared by local news media, the Wichita Regional Chamber, on the City’s social media pages as well as the Wichita Park Foundation pages, so fans of the flag can continue to join this effort. We have also had signup sheets at City Hall, Wichita Park Recreation Centers and other locations. **Current pledges as of the end of last month show 1,108 individuals committing to purchase 1,610 plates.** These include several local Wichita businesses pledging to add the affinity tags to their company fleets:

- Cornejo & Sons – 50 plates
- Metro Courier – 40 plates
- Hutton Construction – 22 plates

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Before I conclude my testimony, I want to give credit where it is due. Becky Fields & Laura Rainwater deserve the real credit for this idea, and helping us with the partnerships, communication and marketing to date. These two ladies are not only great community service representatives for Wichita, but also huge fans of the Wichita flag. And because they know how passionate I am about our flag, they came to me with the idea. Needless to say, I embraced it immediately. Laura Rainwater is with us at this hearing today.

I want to thank the Wichita City Council and the Wichita Parks Foundation for their joint partnership in this effort. Thanks to Adam Seibers with the Revisor's Office for his expert assistance to draft this bill, and to the South Central Kansas Legislative delegation for helping get us to this point. On behalf of the Mayor and City Council, and the Wichita Parks Foundation, I respectfully ask the members of this committee for your support to move this positive effort forward.

Sincerely,

Bryan Frye
Vice-Mayor and District 5
Wichita City Council



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