

Date of Hearing: May 6, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
Buffy Wicks, Chair  
AB 2541 (Mark González) – As Amended March 26, 2026

Policy Committee: Transportation Vote: 16 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill authorizes issuance of “The Lowrider” specialized license plate.

Specifically, this bill directs the California Arts Council to apply to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to sponsor The Lowrider specialized license plate and directs the DMV to issue such a plate, but only if, pursuant to existing law, DMV receives not less than 7,500 applications for The Lowrider specialized license plate.

The bill directs proceeds of the specialized plate, minus DMV’s costs, and upon appropriation by the Legislature, to the California Arts Council, to fund projects related to the purpose of supporting lowrider arts, cultural preservation efforts, youth engagement programs, public exhibitions, community-based cultural events and educational initiatives that celebrate and preserve the history and cultural contributions of lowrider communities in California.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) DMV will incur implementation costs, likely in excess of \$150,000, if the specialized plate meets the 7,500 prepaid application threshold. DMV asserts it is unable to estimate these implementation costs because the department would incur them after the completion of DMV’s comprehensive information technology overhaul, which DMV calls the “Enterprise Modernization Project – the Digital eXperience Project (DXP),” and that DMV would need to modify the new IT system to accommodate the new specialized plate program. DMV notes it would deduct these implementation costs from the fees collected by applicants for the new specialized plates.

The costs described above would be covered by funds in the Motor Vehicle Account (MVA), the main funding source of both the DMV and California Highway Patrol (CHP), which is facing insolvency. The Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) advises, “Until a plan is put in place to address MVA’s structural deficit, we recommend the Legislature set a high bar for considering approval of any proposals that create additional MVA cost pressures and accelerate the risk of insolvency.”

- 2) The Arts Council notes that, while the bill creates a potential future revenue stream to support arts and cultural programming, it also generates immediate administrative workload and staffing needs prior to any revenue realization, as well as ongoing programmatic responsibilities if the plate is successfully issued.

The council identifies the following tasks the bill requires it to complete prior to receiving any revenue, and estimates needing about two-and-a-half positions (a manager, an analyst and half the time of a communications/public affairs specialist), costing around \$300,000 annually (General Fund): coordination with DMV, consulting on plate design, coordinating with CHP for license plate readability review, stakeholder engagement and publicity.

#### COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** The author describes this bill as continuing the state's legacy of "celebrating diversity, honoring impact, and uplifting communities." According to the author:

AB 2541 will signal another wave of support for the lowrider community, all while bolstering arts programs across the state! This current federal administration is spreading hate and vitriol. The Lowrider License Plate Program is a visible symbol of cultural pride, heritage, and resilience. Together, the legislature can ensure that this modern symbol of resistance keeps rolling forward—cruising through our streets for generations to come.

- 2) **Background.** Prior to 2007, any new specialized license plate required specific legislative authorization. This practice was held to be unconstitutional in that the Legislature approved some of the plates, and rejected others, using no standardized or objective criteria for those decisions. Pursuant to AB 84 (Leslie), Chapter 545, Statutes of 2006, the DMV will issue specialized license plates when sponsored by a state agency, and a state agency does not need additional statutory authorization to sponsor a specialized license plate. The plate's message and resulting revenues must support that agency's program.

Existing law authorizes DMV to charge, in addition to the usual registration and license fees, the following additional fees for specialized license plates: \$50 for the initial issuance, \$40 for annual renewal and \$98 to personalize. DMV deducts its administrative costs from the revenues generated. The net revenues derived from a specialized license plate are then available, upon appropriation, for the sponsoring state agency to expend exclusively on projects and programs that promote the state agency's official policy, mission or work.

Before DMV establishes a state-agency-sponsored specialty plate program, the agency must receive at least 7,500 paid applications. The 7,500-application threshold is to ensure DMV's startup costs are fully covered by the portion of the registration fee surcharge directed to DMV. However, 7,500 specialty license applications do not generate sufficient revenue to cover DMV's initial costs. As noted in the Assembly Transportation Committee analysis of this bill, very few specialized plates approved by the Legislature have successfully received 7,500 paid applications.

The author's office reports a great deal of enthusiasm for the concept of a lowrider license plate. Likely so. It seems reasonable to assume a state agency would agree to sponsor a specialized plate, such as The Lowrider specialized license plate, if the agency were convinced there were sufficient demand for such a plate. After all, the agency would financially benefit from the issuance of such a plate.

The bill is sponsored by Brown Issues, which describes itself as “a statewide youth-led organization committed to uplifting Latino culture, advancing social justice, and creating opportunities for young people to lead.” According to Brown Issues:

For decades, California imposed fines, restrictions, and local anti-cruising ordinances that targeted the lowrider community. These policies criminalized cultural expression and attempted to suppress a movement rooted in identity, creativity, and community pride. Despite these barriers, lowriders continued to build, paint, and cruise, transforming cars into rolling works of art that reflect family, faith, and freedom.

In 2023, the California legislature recognized the cultural significance of lowriding by designating the first Sunday of summer as California Lowrider Day under ACR 102. This was followed by the passage of AB 436, which ended local cruising bans statewide in 2024, both marking a historic shift in the state’s cultural and legal landscape. AB 2541 builds on that progress by creating a sustainable funding source for arts and cultural programming at a time when federal support has declined and community organizations face widening resource gaps. This bill strengthens youth engagement, supports local artists, and invests in cultural traditions that have shaped California for generations.

At a moment when diverse communities across the state continue to confront cultural erasure and political division, AB 2541 offers a positive and unifying path forward. Establishing the Lowrider Specialized License Plate affirms California’s commitment to celebrating cultural traditions rooted in resilience and ensuring they continue to thrive.

There is no opposition registered against this bill.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Jay Dickenson / APPR. / (916) 319-2081