

1980-1989

1980



5,226,000 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

The state begins to offer specially designed license plates to ex-prisoners of war.



Vanity and personalized license plates are introduced. Personalized plates have both letters and numbers. Vanity plates have all letters or one, two or three numbers. In the first year, the Secretary of State's office receives 24,000 requests for vanity plates. The initial law allowed for up to six letters in a vanity plate.

Commuter Van and Fertilizer Spreader license plates are issued.

This is the last year for Recreational Camper plates. They had been issued since 1973.

1981



5,980,500 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

This is the last year that license plates for the top seven elected officials are issued as annual plates.

This is the last year that U plates for state-owned vehicles are issued as a two-year plate. They are now made permanent.

1982



5,650,100 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

License plates issued to the top seven state elected officials

change from annual to permanent plates.

Municipal (M) plates are issued as permanent plates. They had been annual plates through 1977 and two-year plates from 1978 to 1981.



U plates for state-owned vehicles are issued as permanent plates. They had been annual plates from 1961 to 1967 and two-year plates from 1968 to 1981.

The state begins to offer specially designed license plates to Congressional Medal of Honor winners.



The state begins to offer specially designed license plates to National Guard members.

The state begins to offer specially designed license plates to retired members of the General Assembly.

A newly designed license plate for ambulances is issued, on which the word "AMBULANCE" is spelled out rather than abbreviated. The first digit of the plate represents the emergency medical service region in which the vehicle operates; the next three digits are the Illinois Department of Public Aid's registration number for the ambulance company; and the last two digits represent the number of the vehicle within the ambulance company's fleet.

1983

5,909,600 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



The Secretary of State is given statutory authority to issue license plates for special events. Before 1983, specially designed plates were available only for ceremonial events such as parades and for members of the Presidential Inaugural Committee. Now, organizations that sponsor special events can order special plates for sale to the public to promote those events.

The state begins to offer specially designed plates to retired members of the General Assembly.

This is the last year that Charitable Vehicle (CV) plates are available for passenger cars. Charitable Bus (CB) plates are issued for the last time.

This is the last year that Amateur Radio plates, B-truck plates, and Trailer (TA) plates are annually issued.

1984

6,024,200 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

The state begins issuing new multi-year license plates to replace the license plates issued in 1979. The plates are made of galvanized steel. A sheltered workshop in Decatur operated by Macon Resources is contracted to make them. Macon Resources has made Illinois license plates ever since.



This design of Illinois' standard passenger plate was on the road from 1984 until 2000

Vanity license plate characters are expanded to seven.

The vanity license plate program is expanded to include Class B (small) trucks.

The disabled are now able to receive disabled vanity plates. Parking cards for the disabled are also introduced.

B-truck (light truck), Trailer (TA) and Amateur Radio (Ham Radio) plates are converted to multi-year plates.

This is the last year that pickup truck, van and recreational vehicles have to be inspected.

As heavier vehicles are permitted to travel Illinois highways, two new truck plates become available with the weight classifications of X and Z.

Semi-trailer plates convert from an annual to a five-year calendar plate.

Charitable Vehicle (CV) plates are now issued only to trucks, buses and vans. This change is implemented after Secretary of State Jim Edgar spots such plates on a Cadillac in 1982.

This is the last year that consular plates are issued to members of any foreign consular corps who serve in Illinois. The U.S. State Department takes over responsibility for issuing license plates for all diplomatic and consular vehicles.

1985

6,538,200 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

Antique Motorcycle license plates begin to be issued.



The state begins to offer specially designed license plates in honor of the Armed Forces Reserves. They have an R prefix. New tow truck plates with the suffix T/W go on sale. Three plates are issued for each tow truck (one for the front, one for the rear, and one for the vehicle being towed).

As honorary consular officials do not receive federally issued plates, Illinois begins to issue “Honorary Consular Plates”.

Passenger plate fees are no longer based on horsepower; a \$48 fee is charged for all vehicles. A discount for eligible senior citizens and disabled persons becomes available.

This is the last year that Recreational Vehicle (RV) and Recreational Trailer (RT) plates are issued annually.

On July 1, a strict new seat belt law goes into effect in Illinois; all front seat passengers must now “buckle up.”

1986

6,607,800 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State’s office.

Motorcycle Trailer plates become available.

On B-truck plates, 999,999 B is passed. Plates are issued in a 1234 AA format, with “B TRUCK” appearing vertically on the right side.

Recreational Vehicle (RV) and Recreational Trailer (RT) are converted to multi-year plates.

The state phases in a more uniform numbering system. Most types of license plates have a prefix or suffix designating the type. Generally, passenger and military types (e.g. Ex-POW) have prefix letters; second-division types and specialty plates have suffix letters.

This is the last year that registration stickers for plates are 1” x 1 1/2” in size.

1987

6, 268,000 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

Passenger car plate stickers increase in size to 1" x 3". Multi-year motorcycle plates with a new design are issued, replacing the plates that had been in use since 1979.

1988

6,055,000 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.



The state begins to offer specially designed license plates to Purple Heart medal recipients. The plate has an A prefix symbolizing "Award."

The state begins to offer hearing-impaired license plates for persons with hearing disabilities. The plate has an H prefix.

This is the last year that license plates for the top seven elected state officials, members of Congress and the honorary consular license plates are issued as permanent plates.

1989

6,159,000 passenger vehicles are registered with the Illinois Secretary of State's office.

A new license plate, "ICC POLICE", is issued for plates on all Illinois Commerce Commission police vehicles.

All officials' license plates are converted from permanent plates to two-year plates. This includes the top seven elected state officials, the state Supreme Court and members of Congress, plus honorary consular license plates.