

EXCLUSIVE: A LOOK AT UPCOMING SPECIALTY AUTO TAGS

The Legislature has announced plans to create a new automobile tag to benefit arts groups. If passed into law, the tags would be available in 2006 for \$25. Proceeds would go to arts programs in the counties where the tags are purchased.

The arts tag would join a list of other specialty tags in Georgia that include everything from wildflowers to dog and cat sterilization, and universities across the state ranging from Savannah State in the south to Gainesville's Brenau University in the north (and including the University of Georgia, the oldest state-chartered university in the nation, located in Athens, the Classic City of the South). We have tags for veterans, ham radio operators, teachers, wildlife enthusiasts and antique motorcycle hobbyists.

You would think that the state has run out of people, places and things to honor. You would be wrong. I have in my hands the list of proposed specialty state tags that you can expect to see in coming years.

The President Peanut tag. This tag would be shaped like a goober and honors former President Jimmy Carter. It is recommended for drivers who are sanctimonious and who constantly second-guess other drivers.

The I Am a Proud Republican tag. This tag will have no information on it. If you want the license number, you will have to wait until the car is sold and then the information will be made available to you 90 days later. Expect brisk sales to members of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

The I Am a Proud Democrat tag. With its unique design incorporating a pizza with anchovies, a six-pack of beer and a car partly submerged in water, this tag proudly salutes the revered patron saint of the Democratic Party, Ted Kennedy.

The Liberal Weenie tag will be available only to transplanted Yankees who look down their noses at Southerners, but wouldn't move back North on a bet because it snows there 10 months a year and everybody hollers when they talk. For an extra 10 bucks, John Kerry will personally autograph the tag. For a pizza and a six-pack, Ted Kennedy will personally autograph the tag.

The Bible Thumper tag is expected to sell very well in Georgia. Its primary appeal is to Southern Baptists who hyperventilate over women preachers, but are strangely mute when their brother in the governor's office reappoints a high-profile regent who lives openly with another woman even though he is married to someone else. For an extra 10 bucks, a copy of the Ten Commandments will be included with the tag and hand-delivered by a female preacher.

The I Love Ice Hockey tag has been put on hold until the state can identify the five people in the state who would actually consider purchasing such a tag.

The I Am a Self-Important Yuppie-Boomer and You Are Not tag. To qualify, you must own an SUV slightly larger than a Patton tank. You must always park at an angle in shopping center parking lots so that no one can get in the space next to you. You will be required to show proof that you talk on your cell phone 18 hours a day and that you never use your turn signals (that little doohickey on the side of your steering wheel). Expect this tag to be a huge seller.

These are but a few of the specialty tags currently under discussion. Others being considered include a tag honoring armadillos and possums run down while trying to cross I-16, a salute to corn-fried shrimp (my favorite), a "Fergit, Hell" tag for the two dozen flaggers who still think they can get the old state flag on the ballot and a tag to honor native Georgians that says "I May Be a Redneck and Talk Funny, but at Least I Don't Live in California Where They Have Earthquakes, Mudslides and Susan Sarandon."

Finally, I am told that there may be a specialty tag honoring newspaper columnists who are equal-opportunity offenders. Far be it from me to second-guess the State of Georgia, but I just can't imagine anyone who would qualify to purchase such a tag.