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Life Issues Connector April 2003 www.lifeissues.org

"Choose Life" License Plate Catching On

By Russ Amerling

When one man decided to create a Choose Life specialty license plate for Florida, he didn't know it would catch on in such a big way. In 1996, Randy Harris, County Commissioner in Marion County, Ocala, FL saw the need for funds to help pregnant women. He wanted to give assistance to those desiring to place their baby with an adoptive family, instead of aborting the child. The Choose Life license plate idea was born. Now, seven years later, the idea is catching on in states around the country.

Specialty plates, on a wide variety of issues from environment to alma maters, generate money for that organization every time a plate is ordered by one of the state's drivers. State legislation is needed to allow for a particular license plate to be made available. It will then generate money to that organization. In this case, the money goes to those organizations that offer adoption but don't perform or refer for abortions.



The Choose Life license plate is law in Florida, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Hawaii. The plates have been produced and are available through the motor vehicles departments of all but one of these states. In South Carolina, a Planned Parenthood injunction is currently being appealed to the 4th Circuit. Arkansas' Governor, Mike Huckabee, signed the law March 10, 2003 stating, "We believed it was a great opportunity to assist in the adoption process and at the same time make a statement about the sanctity of life."

Florida, the first state to make the plates available on August 11, 2000, leads the way with over 36,000 plates on vehicles across the state. This has generated \$1.5 million for the adoption efforts of Crisis Pregnancy Centers, Maternity Homes and certain non-profit adoption agencies. Five additional states began selling the plates and generating funds last year: Alabama \$59,688.75, Hawaii \$4,900, Louisiana \$25,000, Mississippi \$54,168 and Oklahoma \$2,900.

Some opposition to the pro-life plates has arisen in legislatures, but most of it comes from pro-abortion groups through the courts. Of five suits filed, only one is currently holding up sales in South Carolina. They usually go down to defeat when they reach the appellate level, as happened most recently in a Federal Court in Florida. The opposition was tutored on constitutional law by the judges who said, "The First Amendment protects the right to speak. It does not give Appellants the right to stop others with opposing viewpoints from speaking."

If you are interested in making Choose Life license plates available in your state, contact Russ Amerling toll free 877-454-1203 or go to www.choose-life.org.

Russ Amerling is the National Publicity Coordinator for the Choose Life license plate. □

Update April 2014: The Choose Life license plate is now available in 29 states and the District of Columbia, raising \$20 million for the cause of life and adoption in those states. Teams are working in fourteen other states.