



**LICENSE TO ROAM:
VANITY LICENSE PLATES AND THE GR8 STORIES THEY TELL™**

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PRESS RELEASE

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**RONALD REAGAN
& 40 YRS OF CA
VANITY LICENSE PL8S**

"If Ronald Reagan were alive, he would celebrate the 40th birthday of California's vanity license plates, which fund pollution abatement programs," said Stefan Lonce, author of the forthcoming book, *LCNS2ROM – LICENSE TO ROAM: VANITY LICENSE PLATES AND THE GR8 STORIES THEY TELL* (www.VanityPlatesBook.com).

On August 21, 1970, Governor Reagan signed legislation authorizing California to issue personalized Environmental License Plates, as California's vanity plates are called, into law. Today, Californians have "vanitized" 1 million motor vehicles, and Americans have vanitized 9.3 million vehicles.

"Persuading motorists to voluntarily pay for vanity plates, and using the fees to fight pollution caused by the motor vehicles to which the plates are affixed, was a great Reagan idea," Lonce said. California allows seven characters on a vanity plate and charges \$38 annually for the plates (\$49 the first year); plates can be ordered online on the DMV's easy-to-use web site (www.dmv.ca.gov). The CA DMV effectively regulates 32 million vehicles, and 24 million drivers.

Governor Reagan enthusiastically promoted vanity plates. On October 26, 1970, he held a drawing for the most popular vanity plates (#1 plate: **PEACE**). Gov. Reagan's vanity plate promotions produced profits: vanity plates became the cool XMAS GFTS in 1970, in Southern California. On June 24, 1971, Gov. Reagan said, in a press release, that the success of California's vanity plates program was "most heartening." On March 6, 1973, Gov. Reagan presented a certificate of appreciation to the motorist who ordered vanity plate No. 100,000.

"Although Ronald Reagan never vanitized, he would have said that, because it's broke, California must *earn* more from license plates, by promoting vanity plates, redesigning the standard plate, and issuing advertising license plates," Lonce said. "California could earn much more from vanity plates by distributing posters and brochures promoting the plates in DMV offices, by training staffers to ask motorists if they'd like to vanitize, and by holding online contests for the funniest, most poetic, and other categories of vanity plates, with winners getting free plates."

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is promoting California's "Arts" special plate, which has a unique, artistic design; the fees help fund the California Arts Council's programs. "Gov. Schwarzenegger, or his successor, should lead a redesign of California's boring standard license plate because more motorists order vanity plates if they like the plate design. California could also *earn* desperately needed revenues, which don't derive from taxes or mandatory fees, by copyrighting and licensing a popular new standard plate design for use on souvenirs, clothing, and other stuff. Californians should choose the design of a new standard plate in an online vote, as South Carolinians and Texans did," Lonce said.

"California should also try a pilot advertising program on current (metal) license plates, limited to tourism advertisers, who would pay to have their logos and company names on the plates. Motorists who take advertising plates would receive a registration discount, and part of the plate fee would be paid to the DMV, to help it *earn* some of its expenses with revenues that don't come from taxes or mandatory fees," Lonce said. This year, the Florida Senate passed a similar bill. Ronald Reagan, whose 100th birthday would have been on February 6, 2011, would have said, "That's a GR8 idea 4 California, and other states!"

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