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VETS URGE STATE TAG WITH FLAG OF SOUTH THEY CLAIM WOULD PURCHASE PLATE

[Broward Metro Edition]

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The Sons of Confederate Veterans organization launched a campaign Friday to add Florida to a list of states with a specialty license tag bearing the Confederacy's flag.

"There are tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands of people, who would be proud to have on their vehicles," said Bob Hurst of Tallahassee, an area SCV commander. "We believe that those are the opportunity to buy that tag."

According to the organization, nine states already offer a Confederate specialty tag. But Florida could sell.

The organization must first conduct a survey to get support from 30,000 motorists who say they'd back a bill if introduced in the Legislature. Doug Guetzloe, an Orlando marketer and anti-tax crusader, says the survey next week, with legislation likely not to emerge until next year.

"If it's controversial, I'll be there," Guetzloe said.

Gov. Jeb Bush drew plenty of rebel yells in 2001 when he moved a Confederate flag and other historical banners from outside the Capitol to a museum. But with the Confederate banner mostly out of sight, the bitter fights that wracked Georgia, South Carolina and other states, where including the Confederacy's own state flags was attacked as a racist symbol.

Bush said Friday he isn't interested in a Confederate tag.

"I'm not going to buy one. I'm not going to sign the petition to get one," Bush said. "I think it's important to respect our heritage and our history, but I'm not sure a license plate is appropriate for the Sons of Confederate."

Three years ago, when the Sons of Confederate Veterans first floated the idea of a tag, Bush said he would not do anything to block the effort. Still, at the time, the then-chairman of the Florida Black State Legislators, Rep. Ed Jennings, D-Gainesville, said he hoped the tag, "never sees light of day."

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