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# Rebel Sons Take Up Arms for Plate

By BRENT KALLESTAD  
The Associated Press



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PHIL COALE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
H.K. Edgerton, a former NAACP president, unveils a proposed Confederate license plate Friday in Tallahassee while leading a group in a version of "Dixie."

TALLAHASSEE -- It's time for Florida to authorize a specialty license plate displaying the Confederate battle flag to honor the heritage of participants in the Civil War, a Sons of Confederate Veterans organization said Friday.

The proposed plate would feature the rebel flag centered between black numerals with "Florida" in red above and "Confederate Heritage" in red along the bottom.

"It is not racist to promote a common heritage," said H.K. Edgerton, former NAACP president in Asheville, N.C., who led the group in a rousing version of "Dixie" before introducing the proposal. "There will be those uninformed individuals who will attempt to categorize this plate in unflattering terms."

The SCV proposal, however, is unlikely to get far with Florida lawmakers who are already halfway through the 2006 session.

Florida has authorized 106 specialty license plates since its first one that memorialized the Challenger shuttle that exploded in January 1986 on takeoff, killing seven astronauts.

"I'm not going to sign up," said Gov. Jeb Bush, who has been uncomfortable with the Confederate flag as a symbol. In 2001, he ordered one taken down at the Capitol, where it had flown for more than two decades.

Florida, like much of the South, continues to struggle with parts of its history resulting from the 1861-1865 war between the states.

In recent years, South Carolina removed a rebel flag from atop its Capitol, Georgia

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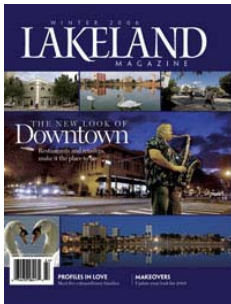
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removed the Confederate battle emblem from its state flag, and the University of Mississippi retired Col. Rebel at its on-field mascot.

However, several southern states do offer license tags observing Confederacy heritage.

In South Carolina, the tags are sold only to SCV members at \$30 above the regular \$24 registration. In Virginia, which offers 180 specialty tags, a Sons of Confederate Veterans plate went on sale in 2002.

The group seeking the plate in Florida must hire an independent organization to complete 30,000 surveys of vehicle owners in the state to comply with a requirement to gauge consumer interest. They are also required to pay an application fee of \$60,000 to the Division of Motor Vehicles and provide long-term marketing plans before production could begin on the proposed plate.

Proceeds from plate sales would be used to pay for the restoration of the original Confederate flags housed in the Museum of Florida History as well as grave locations and markers of Union and Confederate soldiers buried in the state.

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