



The

**James M. Jeffords Center's
Vermont Legislative Research Service**



Expanding Gold Star License Plates Eligibility

member in active duty.

¹ Currently, the only states that don't include any legislation for Gold Star license plates are Washington D.C., Hawaii, Maine, and Michigan;² however, Michigan is currently in the final stages of passing legislation that would also allow the same benefit.³ In all states, the requirements for who is allowed to attain a Gold Star license plate and under what circumstances they are able to attain a Gold Star license plate differ.⁴ While Gold Star lapel buttons and service flags are issued by the Department of Defense, many states direct Gold Star license plate requests to state Departments of Motor Vehicles or state Offices of Veteran's Affairs.^{5,6} The awarding of Gold Star license plates is not controlled by the American Legion.

Background

During World War I, it became commonplace for the parents of soldiers who were serving in active duty to display a Blue Star Banner outside their home to signify their child was participating in the War. As the War progressed, the parents of those who had died in combat, training, accidents, or from sickness began to replace the top star of the Blue Star Banner, with a Gold Star to signify the sacrifice of their child. In 1928, a group of mothers formed an organization called the *Gold Star Mothers* to provide support for other mothers who lost children in World War I.⁷ In 1984, the organization was Congressionally Chartered and today,

¹ Stonesifer, Ruth V. "Gold Star Family License Plate Status, undated." (accessed February 8, 2011). <http://www.goldstarmoms.com/Resources/GSFLicensePlateStatus/GSFStatus.htm>

² Stonesifer, undated.

³ Morrow, Terry. "Veterans; Gold Star license plate eligibility extended." March 10, 2010. (accessed February 8, 2011). <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/hrd/bs/86/hf2567.html>

⁴ Stonesifer, undated.

⁵ American Gold Star Mothers. "Getting Your Gold Star Pin." (accessed April 21, 2011). <http://www.goldstarmoms.com/Join/GoldStarPin/GettingYourGoldStarPin.htm>

⁶ American Gold Star Mothers. "Gold Star Family License Plate Status." (accessed April 21, 2011). <http://www.goldstarmoms.com/Resources/GSFLicensePlateStatus/GSFStatus.htm>

⁷ Stonesifer, Ruth V. "History of the American Gold Star Mothers." (accessed February 8, 2011). <http://www.goldstarmoms.com/WhoWeAre/History/History.html>

serves to

forces of the United States. Ohio's definition of "immediate family" includes "a spouse, parent, (step parent, or other person who acted in loco parentis), grandparent, sibling (whether of the whole or half blood, or by adoption), child (including those by adoption, or stepchild)." ¹⁵

Wisconsin has a similar policy that includes anyone who has had an immediate family member (spouse, grandparent, parent, sibling, child,