Proposal to Eliminate $3 License Plate Fee OK'd

Plan Given Approval of CC-73 Panel

By JOHN LAPLACE (Times-Picayune Staff Correspondent)

BATON ROUGE, La. — A proposal to eliminate the $3 license plate tax from the state constitution passed the constitutional convention's revenue finance and taxation committee Friday afternoon.

The proposal will now go to the full convention for plenary session that will convene July 5 here.

Elimination of the license plate fee came before the CC-73 committee, after a subcommittee on revenue other than property tax failed to come up with a resolution, and passed by a slim two-vote margin.

Opposition to the elimination of the license plate fee said opponents to a new constitution would oppose its passage because the $3 dollar fee was not in the new charter.

"Opponents will pick on this as ammunition to defeat the new constitution, if the Legislature has control of the $3 license plate fee," committee member Arthur J. Planchard of Port Sulphur said.

Inclusion of the fee, he said, is necessary to the passage of the new constitution.

"It is a matter of practicality," Planchard added.

John Clyde Fontenot, a delegate from Ville Platte, said many of his constituents know only one thing about the constitution — the license plate fee is in it.

"My constituents tell me just one thing," Fontenot said. "If you do anything, keep the license plate fee in the constitution."

The people won't understand a constitution without a set license plate fee, he said.

State Rep. Risley "Pappy" Triche said people will understand elimination of the fee.

The two-thirds vote required before raising a tax "is ample protection against raising the fee," Triche said.

"It is not good, or rational to restrict a tax levée on automobiles by putting it in the constitution, when we don't do it elsewhere," Triche added.

People will understand and go along when you have a logical basis to raise a tax, he said.

Restricting a tax by putting it in the constitution doesn't make sense, when due to inflation the cost of production might exceed the $3 dollar constitutional limit, delegate Autley Benjamin said.

"The people don't defeat you when you do something that you feel is right, and eliminating the $3 dollar license plate fee from the constitution is right," committee member state Sen. J. D. DeBlieux said.

The committee also received for consideration a property tax proposal from the Council for A Better Louisiana (CABL).