



## License mess avoided

Published Friday, December 7, 2012

---

The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles made the right call Friday by canceling a flawed proposal to bid out the state's license plate business. The contract was an end run around the people who already produce and distribute the plates in an orderly fashion. If it revisits the idea, the department should make the competitive process more open and fairer, and it should be more sensitive to the practical impact on the public.

The department wanted to redesign license plates using flat rather than raised lettering, claiming flat lettering is easier to read by automated toll booths and red light cameras. It also wanted to examine whether private industry could distribute the plates cheaper than county tax collectors, who do a good job now.

The proposal, though, was rushed, and the department went out of its way to freeze out the tax collectors when it should have invited them to the table. Withdrawing the contract was the only responsible decision given the public backlash and an impending legal battle. And it spared what could have been a major headache for the millions of Floridians who obtain a plate every year.

The state's locally elected tax collectors, in particular Hillsborough County's Doug Belden and Pinellas County's Diane Nelson, served their constituents well by keeping the pressure on the department until it changed course. Next time, the state should be more open and better prepared.

---

© 2012 • All Rights Reserved • Tampa Bay Times  
490 First Avenue South • St. Petersburg, FL 33701 • 727-893-8111  
[Contact Us](#) | [Join Us](#) | [Advertise with Us](#) | [Subscribe to the Tampa Bay Times](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#) | [Standard of Accuracy](#) | [Terms, Conditions & Copyright](#)