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LICENSE TO ROAM:
VANITY LICENSE PLATES AND THE GR8 STORIES THEY TELL™
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SOUTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY APPROVES CHRISTIAN LICENSE PLATE; LITIGATION LIKELY

CROTON-ON-HUDSON, NY – "Today the South Carolina House of Representatives and Senate passed the **I BELIEVE** special license plate, which would apparently be the first American license plate with explicitly religious images, and will probably get the state sued," said Stefan Lonce, the author of the forthcoming book, *LCNS2ROM – LICENSE TO ROAM: VANITY LICENSE PLATES AND THE GR8 STORIES THEY TELL*. *LCNS2ROM* examines the vanity and specialty license plate phenomenon.

South Carolina will begin issuing the **I BELIEVE** plate if Governor Mark Sanford signs it into law.

"I respect the strongly held beliefs of the **I BELIEVE** plate sponsors, but Governor Sanford should consider how much litigation over the plate could cost. I'm not a lawyer, but I know how expensive lawyers are," Lonce said.

The Legislature is considering cutting SC's funding for new school buses, in order to close a budget deficit estimated to be \$180 million in a \$7.1 billion state budget. Governor Sanford, citing the state's budget deficit, recently vetoed a \$21 million appropriation to build 10 regional farmers markets.

The American Jewish Congress has sent a letter to Gov. Sanford urging him to veto the **I BELIEVE** plate, asserting that the plate would be unconstitutional. The ACLU has not issued any statement on the SC **I BELIEVE** plate. Special license plates are no stranger to the courtroom. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, in *Planned Parenthood of South Carolina v. Rose*, enjoined SC from issuing the **CHOOSE LIFE** special plate, which has a pro-life, anti-abortion, message. "The Supreme Court has held that the First Amendment applies to license plates. The **I BELIEVE** plate could be even more controversial than the **CHOOSE LIFE** plate, and it's a sure bet that SC would be sued if it issues the **I BELIEVE** plate," Lonce said.

SC currently issues college, NASCAR, and other special license plates, including plates for such causes as organ donations. Organizations typically sponsor special license plates, and usually receive some of the extra fees that motorists pay for most special plates. No organization sponsored the SC **I BELIEVE** plate, and there will be no additional fee for the plate.

In most states, special license plates can be vanitized with messages created by the motorists, but not in SC. Standard SC plates can be vanitized with messages created by motorists of up to seven characters, for a \$30 fee. According to the *American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators-LCNS2ROM Vanity License Plates Survey*, SC has 45,214 vanitized motor vehicles (representing 1.35 % of registered motor vehicles). The complete *Survey* results are at www.LCNS2ROM.com.

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