

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5041

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 8, 1991

Brief Description: Permitting motorcyclists to use Washington state patrol approved audio headsets and earphones.

SPONSORS: Senators Sellar, Owen, Patterson, West, Vognild, Bauer and Thorsness.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Patterson, Chairman; Nelson, Vice Chairman; Barr, Conner, Erwin, Hansen, Madsen, McMullen, Oke, Sellar, Skratek, Snyder, Thorsness, and Vognild.

Staff: Brian McMorrow (786-7304)

Hearing Dates: January 29, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In 1977 the Legislature prohibited motor vehicle operators from "wearing ... headset[s] or earphones connected to any electronic device capable of receiving a radio broadcast or playing a sound recording...." Clearly, the legislation restricted motorists from using devices which would prevent them from hearing sirens, horns and other sounds crucial to the safe operation of motor vehicles. However, long-time users of these systems in other states have argued that such devices add substantially to the safe operation of motorcycles because operators can rely on voice communication rather than hand signals when communicating with members of their traveling party, and receive timely information about road conditions from their CB. Currently, many states and the Washington State Patrol permit the use of headsets.

SUMMARY:

Motorcyclists will be permitted to wear a helmet with built-in headsets or earphones as approved by the Washington State Patrol.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested January 24, 1991

TESTIMONY FOR:

Motorcyclists will use headsets and earphones to communicate with members of their riding party and receive information about traffic conditions from their CB. State Patrol troopers use similar equipment for communicating and are able to hear all the sounds needed to operate their vehicles safely.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Steve Lind, Washington Traffic Safety Commission; Pat Halstead, Washington State Motorcycle Dealers Association; Rick Jensen, Washington State Patrol