

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5115

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, FEBRUARY 7, 1991

Brief Description: Requiring instruction in pedestrian, bicycle, and school bus safety.

SPONSORS: Senators Murray, Bailey, Thorsness, Gaspard, A. Smith, Rinehart, Talmadge and Erwin; by request of Task Force on Student Transp. Safety.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5115 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chairman; Erwin, Vice Chairman; Craswell, Murray, Oke, Pelz, A. Smith, and Talmadge.

Staff: Susan Mosborg (786-7439)

Hearing Dates: January 29, 1991; February 7, 1991

BACKGROUND:

The Task Force on Student Transportation Safety was established in 1989 (ESHB 2066) to develop recommendations for reducing the dangers children face as they travel to and from school. Among its 11 recommendations is mandating a school safety education program.

In many areas of the state, recent growth in motor vehicle traffic has created unsafe conditions for children travelling to and from school. Many children must walk along and cross busy streets. Those who ride school buses are at heightened risk of an accident during bus loading and unloading.

In 1989, the National Research Council concluded that pupil education programs are one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce deaths and injuries among children travelling to and from school. While many school districts in Washington have school safety programs, they are not required. The State Patrol currently employs 16 safety education officers, located across the state, to help school districts present safety education programs. According to the State Patrol, this number is inadequate to meet school district requests for presentations.

SUMMARY:

School districts are required to provide elementary school children eight hours of instruction in pedestrian, bicycle, and school bus safety each year effective September 1, 1993. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is responsible for

developing and distributing instructional materials that may be used in the programs.

Funding is provided to the State Patrol for hiring four additional safety education officers to assist school districts in their safety education programs.

Funding is also provided to the Traffic Safety Commission for annual driver education programs to inform motorists about pedestrian and school bus laws.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

The specified number of instructional hours students must receive each year in pedestrian, bicycle, and school bus safety is removed.

Appropriation: \$1,000,000 from the public safety education account: \$150,000 to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for developing and distributing instructional materials, \$600,000 to the State Patrol for additional public safety officers, and \$250,000 to the Traffic Safety Commission for driver education regarding pedestrian and school bus laws.

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

The Washington State Patrol safety education officers would expand a program that was started again in 1988-89 after having lapsed in the early '80s. Uniform school safety education should be available throughout the state. Most school districts are already providing some safety education.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: FOR: Members, Student Transportation Safety Task Force: Jeff Cook, Northshore School District, Martha Shreve, School Bus Driver, Kennewick School District, Jim Stevenson, Federal Way School District, and Mary Weis, Federal Way School Board; Alison Timmons, parent; Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association; Perry Keithley, OSPI; NEUTRAL: Tim Erickson, Washington State Patrol