

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SHB 1741

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Synopsis as Enacted

C 501 L 93

**Brief Description:** Revising penalties for ignoring traffic tickets.

By House Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Representatives Appelwick, Ludwig, Johanson and Orr).

House Committee on Judiciary  
Senate Committee on Law & Justice

**Background:** Many traffic laws have been "decriminalized" and made civil infractions instead of crimes. For these infractions, no jail time may be imposed, but civil punishment includes fines and in some instances loss of driving privileges. Although infractions themselves are not crimes, failing to respond to a notice of infraction is a crime.

Under the "Nonresident Violator Compact," a state may agree to release motorists from another state who are cited for traffic law violations without requiring the motorists to post appearance bonds. Such an agreement is dependent, however, on the home state of a cited motorist having a law which requires driver's license suspension for failing to comply with a traffic citation. Washington has adopted the compact, but does not have a law that would require license suspension for Washington drivers who fail to comply with citations issued by other participants in the compact. Washington does have a law that prohibits renewal of a license for a person who has failed to comply.

The state's motor vehicle code has various escalating penalties for driving without a license and for driving while intoxicated (DWI). The crime of driving while a license is suspended or revoked may be committed in any one of three degrees, depending on the offense for which the license was suspended or revoked. Driving without a license that was suspended for being an habitual traffic offender is first-degree driving with a suspended or revoked license. The second-degree offense involves driving following the loss of a license for DWI or other relatively serious traffic offenses. The third-degree offense involves driving after a license has been suspended or revoked solely for secondary reasons such as failure to furnish proof of

financial responsibility, or failure to renew a license after a period of suspension has expired.

**Summary:** Crimes relating to failure to respond to a traffic infraction and failure to comply with a traffic citation are repealed. The offenses are made infractions for which the Department of Licensing (DOL) is to suspend a driver's license. If a Washington driver fails to respond or comply in the case of an out-of-state offense, DOL will also suspend the driver's license. A suspension continues until the driver responds or complies, shows proof of financial responsibility, and pays a \$20 reinstatement fee.

The mandatory minimum jail term for first-degree driving with a suspended or revoked license as the result of being an habitual offender is reduced from one year to 180 days. The crime of driving with a suspended or revoked license in the third degree is amended to include persons who drive while their licenses are suspended as the result of failing to respond to a notice of a traffic infraction or failing to comply with a citation.

Several changes are made with respect to the crime of DWI:

- (1) The ground for suspending the otherwise mandatory jail time for DWI is changed. The required risk to a defendant's physical or mental well-being must be "substantial."
- (2) The Department of Social and Health Services, instead of the court, must periodically review the alcohol information schools attended by DWI offenders.
- (3) For persons convicted of DWI while they were driving with a suspended or revoked license in the first or second degree, the minimum mandatory fine is raised from \$200 to \$500. This fine and its accompanying mandatory 90 days in jail no longer apply to persons convicted of DWI while driving without a license as a result of third-degree driving with a suspended or revoked license.
- (4) A change is made to an ambiguous requirement that a court impose, in addition to the mandatory jail time for DWI, a suspendible term of imprisonment "not exceeding 180 days" that is suspendible but not deferrable "for a period not exceeding two years." This provision is changed to require that the additional suspendible term of confinement be for a period of up to two years.

Various changes are made to the form requirements for notices of traffic infractions and citations in order to reflect the changes made in the substantive provisions described above.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House	98	0	
Senate	47	0	(Senate amended)
House			(House refused to concur)
Senate	47	0	(Senate receded)

**Effective:** July 25, 1993