

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESSJM 8010

As Passed Senate, February 11, 1998

Brief Description: Encouraging the federal government to enact laws requiring airbag deactivation switches be installed in new vehicles.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Strannigan and Oke).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/25/97, 2/27/97 [DPS].

Passed Senate, 3/11/97, 48-0.

Passed Senate, 2/11/98, 40-4.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Joint Memorial No. 8010 be substituted therefor, and the substitute memorial do pass.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Haugen, Goings, Heavey, Horn, Jacobsen, Morton, Oke, Patterson, Prentice, Rasmussen and Sellar.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322)

Background: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is responsible for proscribing most vehicle safety standards under the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966. Where NHTSA has proscribed specific vehicle equipment safety standards, individual states are precluded from enacting different vehicle equipment safety standards.

NHTSA requires vehicles to be equipped with certain "passive restraint" devices. One such safety device is the airbag. Airbags on the passenger side of vehicles have come under increased scrutiny in the past year due to deaths reportedly caused by the airbags themselves.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Legislature formally petitions the United States Congress to adopt new laws, regulations and standards that would require a deactivation switch for both driver and passenger-side airbags, thus allowing the vehicle driver to deactivate the passenger-side airbag if that seat is occupied by a vulnerable passenger (such as a child).

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: The problem is injuries caused by airbags is serious, but state government is preempted from addressing the problem. The United States Congress is empowered to address the problem.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Strannigan, prime sponsor; Steve Lind, Traffic Safety Commission.