

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 6264

As Reported By House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to intermediate drivers' licenses.

Brief Description: Establishing intermediate drivers' licenses.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Eide, Costa, Swecker, Gardner, Kohl-Welles, Shin, Patterson, Brown, Haugen, Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Sheahan, Rasmussen, Fairley, Goings and Franklin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/16/00, 2/24/00 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Establishes a graduated licensing system that includes a mandatory six month learner's permit followed by an intermediate licensing period.
- During the intermediate licensing period, a teenage driver cannot drive between midnight and 5:00 a.m. unless he or she is driving for agricultural purposes.
- Limitations are placed upon the number of passengers who may be transported by a teenage driver during the first 12 months of the licensing period.
- If a novice driver commits a traffic infraction, the court waives the fine to the extent allowed and directs the driver to obtain additional driver training at his or her own expense.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Fisher, Democratic Co-Chair; Mitchell, Republican Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic 1st Vice Chair; Edwards, Democratic 2nd Vice Chair; Hankins, Republican Vice Chair; Buck; G. Chandler; DeBolt; Fortunato; Haigh; Hurst; Lovick; McDonald; Mielke; Morris; Murray; Ogden; Pflug; Radcliff; Romero; Schindler; Schual-Berke; Scott; Wood and Woods.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Ericksen, Republican Vice Chair and Hatfield.

Staff: Paul Neal (786-7315).

Background:

A Washington resident under the age of 18 is eligible for an unrestricted driver's license if the parent or guardian signs the application and the applicant has completed an approved driver's education course and the applicant successfully completes the driver examination conducted by the Department of Licensing (DOL).

Graduated driver's licensing is a system of three phases of licensing that a driver under the age of 18 must progress through in order to qualify for an unrestricted driver's license.

Currently, 34 states have adopted legislation that restricts teen driving and 22 states have adopted a full graduated driver's licensing system.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Legislature recognizes the need to develop a graduated driver's licensing system.

An intermediate driver's license is established.

Intermediate License Requirements: A driver's license applicant under the age of 18 must apply for an intermediate driver's license. To qualify for an intermediate driver's license, the applicant must have possessed a learner's permit for six months, passed a road test, passed a driver's education course, and certified to the DOL that the applicant has at least 50 hours of supervised driving experience including 10 hours at night.

Intermediate License Restrictions: Except for passengers who are members of the licensee's immediate family, the licensee may not transport any passengers under the age of 20 during the first six months after issuance of an intermediate license. After

the first six months, the holder may not have more than three passengers in the car under the age of 20.

The holder of an intermediate driver's license may not operate a vehicle between midnight and 5 a.m. except when the holder is accompanied by a parent or guardian. The passenger and time-of-day restrictions do not apply if the licensee is driving for agricultural purposes.

Intermediate License Penalties: The first time a person issued an intermediate driver's license is convicted of or found to have committed a traffic offense: (1) The DOL must mail a letter to the person's parent or guardian indicating potential future penalties; and (2) the court waives the fine to the extent allowed and directs the licensee to obtain two more hours of behind the wheel training at his or her own expense. On a second conviction or finding, the DOL must suspend the intermediate license for six months. On a third conviction or finding, the DOL must suspend the intermediate license until the person turns 18. Driving with a suspended intermediate driver's license is a misdemeanor. Enforcement of intermediate violations may only be accomplished as a secondary action.

The DOL must issue an instruction permit and an intermediate license in distinctive forms.

The bill is effective July 1, 2001. It includes a provision for sunset review no later than June 30, 2007.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill: The amended bill makes the following changes to the underlying bill:

- All exemptions or exceptions to the driving restrictions are eliminated except for the exemption for agricultural purposes;
- For the first infraction committed by an intermediate licensee, the court waives the fine to the extent allowed and directs the licensee to obtain two more hours of behind the wheel training at his or her own expense; and
- The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee is directed to conduct a sunset review no later than June 30, 2007, with the assistance of the DOL and the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2001.

Testimony For: Teenage drivers are disproportionately represented in traffic collisions and traffic fatalities. Passage of similar licensing systems in other states has resulted in reductions in collisions and fatalities for teenage drivers. Similar results could be expected in Washington.

Testimony Against: The passenger restrictions are contrary to the Legislature's policy of encouraging car-pooling. Forcing teen drivers to drive alone also raises safety concerns in the event of a break-down.

Testified: (In support) Steve Lind, Washington Traffic Safety Commission; Lindsay Harsen, Rogers High School in Puyallup; David Kinnunen, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Jim Robinson, Redmond City Council; Eric Robertson, Washington State Patrol, Clark Holloway, Department of Licensing; Senator McAuliffe; Emelissa Baluyot and Emily McLoud, Sen. McAuliffe's Youth Council; Barbara Casey, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Clyde McBrayer, parent; Jean Leonard, State Farm Insurance Companies; Janet Ray, AAA Washington; Karen Norton, Washington Traffic Safety Educator's Association; and Dr. Cecil Snodgrass, Washington State Medical Association.

(In support with concerns) Marie Goodart, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers.

(Opposed) Amber Whitcher, student from Belfair, WA.