

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5449

As of February 3, 1999

Title: An act relating to provisional driver licensing.

Brief Description: Issuing provisional drivers' licenses.

Sponsors: Senators Prentice, Goings, B. Sheldon, Haugen and Franklin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/4/99.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Paul Neal (786-7315)

Background: Washington State has the fourth lowest automobile accident fatality rate nationwide. However, young drivers are disproportionately represented in the crashes that do occur. Drivers aged 16 to 19 have collision rates three times higher than those for the overall population and fatality rates that are twice as high.

A person under age 18 may obtain a driver's license by meeting certain requirements. First, the person must acquire a learner's permit in order to participate in traffic safety education. A learner's permit can be obtained at age 15 or, in some cases, at age 15. Second, a person who is at least 16 must have completed traffic safety education and have the written permission of a parent or guardian in order to obtain a license. Third, the person must pass a written and driving test administered by the Department of Licensing.

If a person completes those requirements, he or she receives a full, unrestricted driver's license. Currently there are no license restrictions specifically directed at young drivers other than provisions suspending the driver's license for alcohol, drug, or weapons violations.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The minimum age for holding a driver's license is raised to age 18. The minimum age for holding a learner's permit is raised to 16. Driver's licenses currently held by persons under the age of 18 and learner's permits held by persons under age 16 are canceled.

Regardless of age, a person must have held an instruction permit for a minimum of two years in order to qualify for a license. In order to drive under an instruction permit, a person must be accompanied by a licensed driver with at least three years driving experience and no traffic infractions or offenses on their record.

Other statutes covering drivers under the age of 18 are amended to be consistent with the new age standard:

- A minimum qualifying age of 16 is instituted for a farm vehicle permit;
- Provisions regarding suspension or revocation of a driver's license for persons under 18 are repealed;
- The minimum age for a licensed driver from out-of-state to obtain a Washington license is raised to age 18.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.