

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1460

As Reported by House Committee On:
Transportation

Title: An act relating to enforcement of safety belt laws.

Brief Description: Enforcing seat belt laws as a primary action.

Sponsors: Representatives Lovick, Jarrett, Hurst, Jackley, Cooper, Fisher, Edmonds, Morell, Ahern, Ogden, Simpson, O'Brien, Darneille, Kagi and Ruderman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/26/01, 3/6/01 [DP].

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Seat belts laws are enforced as a primary action.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 20 members: Representatives Fisher, Democratic Co-Chair; Mitchell, Republican Co-Chair; Cooper, Democratic Vice Chair; Hankins, Republican Vice Chair; Lovick, Democratic Vice Chair; Ahern, Armstrong, Edmonds, Haigh, Hurst, Jackley, Jarrett, Marine, Morell, Murray, Ogden, Reardon, Rockefeller, Simpson and Woods.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Ericksen, Republican Vice Chair; Anderson, G. Chandler, Hatfield, Romero, Schindler, Skinner, Sump and Wood.

Staff: Penny Nerup (786-7335).

Background:

In a radio address in 1996, then President Clinton asked all Americans to always wear seat belts as a first line of defense against traffic injuries and fatalities. In 1997 President Clinton directed the Secretary of Transportation to prepare a plan to increase the use of seat belts nationwide. The President directed the secretary to work with congress, the

states, and other concerned groups, including the automobile and insurance industries and safety and consumer groups, to develop the plan. The plan was to address three areas: 1) state laws that require the use of seat belts; 2) assistance from the Department of Transportation to improve these state laws; and 3) a comprehensive education campaign by the public and private sectors to help the public understand the need to wear seat belts. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) was directed to be the lead agency in implementing the plan.

One of the areas of the NHTSA implementation plan was to conduct active, high-visibility enforcement of seat belt laws to achieve higher seat belt use rates. The NHTSA believes that seat belt use laws need to be enforced in the same manner as other traffic infractions, such as speeding or running a red light.

Except for those laws specific to children under 16 years of age, Washington's seat belt laws are a secondary action, meaning that an infraction can only be written after the officer stops the vehicle for another traffic infraction. Safety belt use laws are the only laws in America that make a distinction between primary (also known as standard enforcement-) and secondary enforcement. Less than half the states currently have primary enforcement of seat belt laws.

Summary of Bill:

Violation of the use of seat belt laws is enforced as a primary action.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except Section 2 which takes effect on July 1, 2002.

Testimony For: Primary enforcement works and will save lives, especially younger drivers. Belts are necessary for air bags to work properly. Use of belts also saves money.

Testimony Against: The answer is education, not legislation.

Testified: (Support) Bill Carlisle, Traffic Safety Commission; Kevin Quinlan, National Transportation Safety Board; Rick Bart, Snohomish County Sheriff's Office; Bob Leichner, Washington State Patrol; Maurice Hannigan, National Safety Council; and Tony Gomez, Public Health Seattle & King County.

(Support with Concerns) Onofre Contreras, Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

(Opposed) Merton Cooper, citizen.