

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5782

As Passed Senate, February 8, 2002

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

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

Sponsors: Senator Haugen; by request of Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/26/01, 3/7/01 [DP, DNP]; 1/21/02 [DP, DNP].
Passed Senate: 2/8/02, 25-23.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Eide, Kastama, Keiser, Oke, Prentice, Shin and Swecker.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Benton, Finkbeiner, Horn and McDonald.

Staff: Dean Carlson (786-7305)

Background: Failure to comply with the seat belt laws of this state results in a traffic infraction. However, law enforcement can only enforce the seat belt laws as a secondary action when a driver has been stopped for another violation.

Summary of Bill: Violation 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.

Testimony For: This bill will save 36 lives and prevent 900 injuries per year. It has been very successful in California. This is the right thing to do and will save lives. The congressional black caucus supports a primary seat belt law. This is towards the top of the list of recommendations for the National Transportation Safety Commission. This will save lives and health care costs.

Testimony Against: I do not agree with telling people what to do; education rather than legislation.

Testified: Bill Carlile, Association of Washington Cities representative on Traffic Safety Commission (pro); Kevin Quinlan, National Transportation Safety Board (pro); Rick Bart, Snohomish County Sheriff (pro); Chief Robert Leichner, Washington State Patrol (pro); Maurice Hannigan, National Safety Council (pro); Representative John Lovick (pro); Merton Cooper, citizen (con); Tony Gomez, Public Health/Seattle and King County (pro).