

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5490

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, March 3, 2005

Title: An act relating to noise prevention for motor vehicles.

Brief Description: Tightening muffler noise standards.

Sponsors: Senators Kastama, Kline and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/22/05, 3/3/05 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Jacobsen, Vice Chair; Poulsen, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Esser, Kastama, Mulliken, Oke, Spanel and Weinstein.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Under current law, every motor vehicle must at all times be equipped with a muffler in good working order and in constant operation to prevent excessive or unusual noise. Motor vehicle exhaust systems may not be modified in a manner which will amplify or increase the noise emitted by the engine above that emitted by the muffler originally installed on the vehicle. Additionally, it is unlawful for a person to operate a motor vehicle which has been amplified so that the vehicle's exhaust noise exceeds ninety-five decibels. However, proper authorities must prove that the exhaust system modification results in noise amplification in excess of ninety-five decibels.

Summary of Bill: The language prohibiting noise amplification for a motor vehicle exhaust system in excess of ninety-five decibels is removed. The requirement that proper authorities must prove the modification results in noise amplification in excess of ninety-five decibels is also removed.

Current law language is retained prohibiting motor vehicle exhaust systems from being modified in a manner which will amplify or increase the noise emitted by the engine above that emitted by the muffler originally installed on the vehicle.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Law enforcement agencies have reported that it is difficult to enforce the specific muffler decibel level requirement in current law because of the need to operate a decibel meter. Most officers are able to detect the sound of certain vehicles and can tell whether a modification to the muffler has occurred. The muffler decibel level threshold is too awkward and should be repealed.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Senator Kastama, sponsor; Fred Fakkema, WA State Patrol.