
Transportation Committee

HB 1460

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

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

Brief Summary of Bill
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Seat belt laws are enforced as a primary action.

Hearing Date: 1/14/02

Staff: Penny Nerup (786-7335).

Background:

Except for those laws specific to children six years of age and under, 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 suspected traffic infraction, a violation of an equivalent local ordinance, or some other offense. Safety belt use laws are the only laws in America that make a distinction between primary (also known as "standard enforcement") and secondary enforcement.

Seventeen states, including California and Oregon (and British Columbia), have primary enforcement of seat belt laws. Studies show that seat belt usage rates in those states average 17 percent higher than states with secondary laws.

Studies also show that wearing seat belts saves lives and reduces the severity of injuries in a crash. The economic benefit of a primary law in Washington State, as estimated by the National Traffic Safety Administration, is more than \$60 million per year.

Summary of Bill:

Wearing a seat belt is enforced as a primary action.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 9, 2002.

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