

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5116

AS PASSED SENATE, JANUARY 27, 1992

Brief Description: Allowing school bus drivers to report violators.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators Murray, Bailey, Thorsness, Gaspard, A. Smith, Rinehart, Madsen, Talmadge, Bauer and Erwin; by request of Task Force on Student Transp. Safety).

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5116 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Bailey, Chairman; Erwin, Vice Chairman; Anderson, Murray, Oke, Pelz, Rinehart, A. Smith, and Talmadge.

Staff: Mich'l Prentice Needham (786-7439)

Hearing Dates: January 29, 1991; February 14, 1991

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

BACKGROUND:

The Task Force on Student Transportation Safety was established in 1989 to develop recommendations for reducing the dangers children face as they travel to and from school. One of its recommendations is to reduce violations of the school bus stop law.

At this time, school bus drivers file a report of a violation with a law enforcement agency if they observe a violation. School bus drivers have complained that the reports are often not pursued by the law enforcement agency. If they are pursued, often the law enforcement agency cannot prosecute because the school bus driver is unable to identify the driver. In those cases, the law enforcement agency sends a letter to the owner of the vehicle.

SUMMARY:

If school bus drivers decide to report a school bus stop law violation, they must make a report to a law enforcement agency within 72 hours after the violation occurred and the report must include the time and location at which the violation occurred, the vehicle license plate number, and a description of the vehicle involved in the violation. Law enforcement officers must initiate an investigation of the reported school bus stop law violation within ten working days after receiving the report by contacting the owner of the vehicle involved in

the violation and asking the owner to identify the driver of the vehicle at the time of the violation. The owner is required to identify the driver unless the owner believes the information is self-incriminating. If the investigating officer is able to identify the driver and has reasonable cause to believe a violation has occurred, the law enforcement officer must issue a citation. Failure to investigate within the ten working day period does not prohibit further investigation or prosecution.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall conduct a pilot program to test the feasibility of using video cameras to identify motorists who illegally pass school buses during loading and unloading. The pilot shall involve at least one school district. Findings shall be reported to the Legislature December 30, 1992.

Appropriation: \$45,000 from the general fund to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the video camera pilot project.

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

Often, law enforcement does not follow through on bus driver reports of school bus law violations because bus drivers have difficulty accurately identifying the make, model and license number of the vehicle involved. In addition, on some bus routes there are so many violations, bus drivers stop reporting them.

Better enforcement of the school bus law is needed. The use of video cameras has been a successful tool in enforcing Seattle's anti-cruising ordinance.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: FOR: Members, Student Transportation Safety Task Force: Jeff Cook, Northshore School District, Martha Shreve, School Bus Driver, Kennewick School District, Jim Stevenson, Federal Way School District, Mary Weis, Federal Way School Board; Jim Justin, Association of Washington Cities; Dwayne Slate, Washington State School Directors' Association

HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

A school bus may be equipped with a single hazard strobe lamp that meets State Patrol standards. The lamp may be used when the bus is occupied with children or when the bus is in motion in sight-obscuring conditions; the bus is stopping on, standing on, or starting onto a highway and visibility is a problem; or visibility is limited by geographic hazards.

The appropriation is removed and section 3 is null and void unless funded in the budget.