

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2560

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 28, 2002

Title: An act relating to driver training schools.

Brief Description: Shifting approval of driver training schools from the superintendent of public instruction to the department of licensing.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives Quall, O'Brien, Lovick, Mitchell, Clements, Sump, Simpson, Sehlin, Cooper, Delvin, Boldt, Morell, Kessler, Buck, Hankins, Fisher, Armstrong, Mielke, Rockefeller, Haigh, Nixon, Kenney and Jackley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/25/02, 2/28/02 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Benton, Eide, Finkbeiner, Jacobsen, Keiser, Oke, Prentice and Shin.

Staff: Dean Carlson (786-7305)

Background: Washington residents under age 18 are required to take a driver training class in order to obtain a driver's license, except under very limited and specific circumstances. These drivers may take their training classes within their public high schools or by attending classes at a driver training school.

Regardless of where the classes are held, in public high schools or in driver training schools, current law requires that the driver training classes and instructors meet standards established by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) if the classes include persons under the age of 18. Also, under current law, the Department of Licensing (DOL) is required to oversee and license driver training schools and their instructors.

Summary of Amended Bill: Driver training schools and their instructors must meet the standards established by DOL and be annually approved by DOL, whether or not they teach persons under the age of 18. The standards are set by DOL with the advice of the driver instructor advisory committee made up of persons from DOL, OSPI, driver training schools, driver training instructors, and the Washington State Traffic Safety Commission. All instructors that teach children under the age of 18 must submit to a criminal background check.

OSPI still sets the standards and approves those traffic safety education classes conducted in high schools.

The advisory committee must consider the teacher certification standards used by OSPI. An applicant for a driver's license over the age of 16 may ask for a waiver of the six-month driver's permit requirement if he or she gets a notarized statement from a parent and physician that there is a family medical emergency.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The advisory committee shall consider the certification standards used by OSPI. Persons under 18 can ask for a waiver of the six-month driver's permit requirement to get a driver's license if there is a family medical reason. The emergency clause is removed from the bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: If driver training schools are under one agency, it is easier to hold them accountable. There are only two states that have the dual regulations. Private schools handle about 35 percent of students under 18. Agree with the background check requirement and would like to maintain the same curriculum.

Testimony Against: Currently Washington has the third lowest fatality rate in the country and teens are 15-20 percent below the national average. By getting rid of dual regulation we should not start dual standards. The language on the background checks should be the same as for teachers. Certification and curriculum should be kept the same for both types of schools. If you eliminate traffic safety from the public schools, the prices will go up in the private system.

Testified: Dave Quall, prime sponsor (pro); Terry Bergeson, OSPI (con); Tom Harris, Washington Professional Traffic Safety Association (pro); Dawn Vyvyan, Washington Professional Traffic Safety Association (pro).