

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6547

As Passed Senate, February 18, 2002

Title: An act relating to traffic safety education for persons under the age of eighteen.

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

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Haugen, Johnson, Eide, Horn, Spanel, Gardner, Benton, Winsley, Hale, Regala and Hewitt).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/6/02, 2/11/02 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/18/02, 45-1.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6547 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Benton, Eide, Finkbeiner, Horn, Jacobsen, Johnson, Keiser, McAuliffe, McDonald, Oke, Prentice, T. Sheldon 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 meet standards established by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Driver training schools who teach residents under the age of 18 must be annually approved by OSPI. Also, under current law, the Department of Licensing (DOL) is required to oversee and license driver training schools and their instructors.

Summary of Bill: Driver training classes offered to Washington residents under age 18 by driver training schools must meet standards established by the driving instructor advisory committee within DOL. Driver training schools must be annually approved by DOL. The advisory committee overseeing driver training schools must take into consideration the instructor certification standards used by OSPI. All instructors that teach children under the age of 18 must submit to criminal background checks.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: It doesn't make sense to be regulated by two overlapping agencies. Our students don't always fit into the way the high schools teach traffic safety. New regulations are making it difficult for driver training schools to stay in business. We are very concerned about who teaches our children and want to make sure that the quality of education is not compromised.

Testimony Against: The current system has provided quality training evidenced by this state's safety record. There is a good working relationship between OSPI and DOL. We would like to continue working with the commercial driving schools to work out the issues with our new rules.

Testified: Don Munro, Washington Professional Traffic Safety Association, WPTSA, (pro); Dawn Vyvyan, WPTSA (pro); Jim Ervine, WPTSA, (pro); Greg Williamson, OSPI (con); Alex Hansen, OSPI (con); Debbie Cottonware, WTSEA (concerns)