

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 5041

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to the use of Washington state patrol approved audio headsets and earphones by motorcyclists.

Brief Description: Permitting motorcyclists to use Washington state patrol approved audio headsets and earphones.

Sponsor(s): Senators Sellar, Owen, Patterson, West, Vognild, Bauer and Thorsness.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Transportation, March 28, 1991, DP;
Passed House, April 15, 1991, 95-0;
Passed Legislature, 95-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 23 members: Representatives R. Meyers, Vice Chair; Betrozoff, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Basich; Cantwell; Day; G. Fisher; Forner; Haugen; Horn; P. Johnson; R. Johnson; Jones; Kremen; Mitchell; Nelson; Orr; Prentice; Prince; Schmidt; Wilson; Wood; and Zellinsky.

Staff: David Williams (786-7305).

Background: In 1977 the Legislature prohibited motor vehicle operators from "wearing...headset[s] or earphones connected to any electronic device capable of receiving a radio broadcast or playing a sound recording...." Clearly, the legislation restricted motorists from using devices which would prevent them from hearing sirens, horns and other sounds crucial to the safe operation of motor vehicles. However, long-time users of these systems in other states have argued that such devices add substantially to the safe operation of motorcycles because operators can rely on voice communication rather than hand signals when communicating with members of their traveling party, and receive timely information about road conditions from their CB. Currently, many states and the Washington State Patrol permit the use of headsets.

Summary of Bill: Motorcyclists will be permitted to wear a helmet with built-in headsets or earphones as approved by the Washington State Patrol.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Motorcyclists will use headsets and earphones to communicate with members of their riding party and receive information about traffic conditions from their CB. State Patrol troopers use similar equipment for communicating and are able to hear all the sounds needed to operate their vehicles safely.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Robin Torner, ABATE of Washington; Don Mapp, Department of Licensing; and Tim Erickson, Washington State Patrol.