

OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LEGISLATION HANDBOOK: A GUIDE FOR PROPONENTS

William B. Wilson

Teknekron, Inc.
1483 Chain Bridge Road
McLean, Virginia 22101

Contract No. DOT HS-7-01644
Contract Amt. \$82,635.25



FEBRUARY 1979
FINAL REPORT

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Prepared For
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Washington, D.C. 20590

"Prepared for the Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration under Contract No.: DOT-HS-7-01644. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration."

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|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Report No. DOT-HS-804 780 | 2. Government Accession No. | 3. Recipient's Catalog No. | |
| 4. Title and Subtitle Occupant Restraint Legislation Handbook: A Guide for Proponents | | 5. Report Date February 1979 | 6. Performing Organization Code |
| 7. Author(s) William B. Wilson | | 8. Performing Organization Report No. | |
| 9. Performing Organization Name and Address Teknekron, Inc. 1483 Chain Bridge Road McLean, Virginia 22101 | | 10. Work Unit No. (TRAIS) | 11. Contract or Grant No. DOT-HS-7-01644 |
| 12. Sponsoring Agency Name and Address National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 400 7th Street, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20590 | | 13. Type of Report and Period Covered Final Report - Volume II April 1977 - February 1979 | |
| 14. Sponsoring Agency Code | | | |
| 15. Supplementary Notes | | | |
| <p>16. Abstract</p> <p>This document is intended to serve as a working guide to individuals and organizations involved in efforts to gain legislative approval of general safety belt usage laws or child restraint laws. The information contained in this handbook falls into two categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and data to support arguments on behalf of occupant restraint legislation and to overcome the objections and reservations of non-supporters. • Strategies, tactics, and methods for communicating the above data to state legislators, traffic safety officials, police officials, media representatives, and others. <p>The focus of the manual is on developing effective state-level campaigns to obtain passage of occupant restraint laws. Accordingly, the handbook is designed for a variety of potential users, including state legislators, state traffic safety officials, and members of the general public. This handbook culminates more than fourteen months of intensive research. For a complete explication of the research conducted in support of this handbook, readers are referred to the companion volume of this report--<u>Final Report on Safety Belt Usage Attitude Study</u>.</p> | | | |
| 17. Key Words Occupant Restraint Legislation, Safety Belt Usage Law, Child Restraint Law, Safety Belts, Occupant Restraints | | 18. Distribution Statement Document is available to the public through National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Virginia 22161 | |
| 19. Security Classif. (of this report) Unclassified | 20. Security Classif. (of this page) Unclassified | 21. No. of Pages 143 | 22. Price |

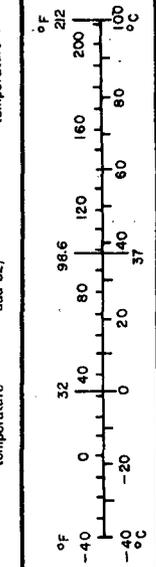
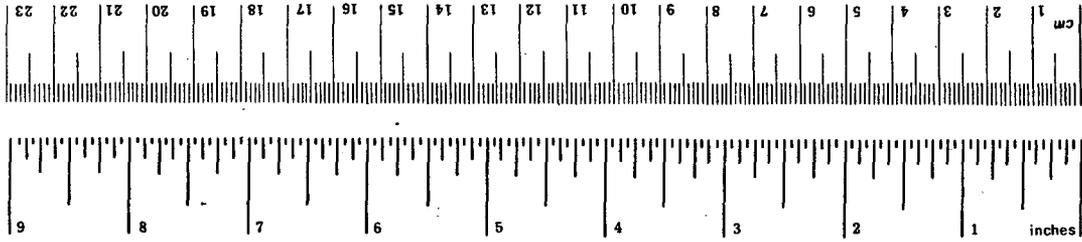
METRIC CONVERSION FACTORS

Approximate Conversions to Metric Measures

| Symbol | When You Know | Multiply by | To Find | Symbol |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| LENGTH | | | | |
| in | inches | *2.5 | centimeters | cm |
| ft | feet | 30 | centimeters | cm |
| yd | yards | 0.9 | meters | m |
| mi | miles | 1.6 | kilometers | km |
| AREA | | | | |
| in ² | square inches | 6.5 | square centimeters | cm ² |
| ft ² | square feet | 0.09 | square meters | m ² |
| yd ² | square yards | 0.8 | square meters | m ² |
| mi ² | square miles | 2.6 | square kilometers | km ² |
| | acres | 0.4 | hectares | ha |
| MASS (weight) | | | | |
| oz | ounces | 28 | grams | g |
| lb | pounds | 0.45 | kilograms | kg |
| | short tons (2000 lb) | 0.9 | tonnes | t |
| VOLUME | | | | |
| tsp | teaspoons | 5 | milliliters | ml |
| Tbsp | tablespoons | 15 | milliliters | ml |
| fl oz | fluid ounces | 30 | milliliters | ml |
| c | cups | 0.24 | liters | l |
| pt | pints | 0.47 | liters | l |
| qt | quarts | 0.95 | liters | l |
| gal | gallons | 3.8 | liters | l |
| ft ³ | cubic feet | 0.03 | cubic meters | m ³ |
| yd ³ | cubic yards | 0.76 | cubic meters | m ³ |
| TEMPERATURE (exact) | | | | |
| °F | Fahrenheit temperature | 5/9 (after subtracting 32) | Celsius temperature | °C |

Approximate Conversions from Metric Measures

| Symbol | When You Know | Multiply by | To Find | Symbol |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| LENGTH | | | | |
| mm | millimeters | 0.04 | inches | in |
| cm | centimeters | 0.4 | inches | in |
| m | meters | 3.3 | feet | ft |
| m | meters | 1.1 | yards | yd |
| km | kilometers | 0.6 | miles | mi |
| AREA | | | | |
| cm ² | square centimeters | 0.16 | square inches | in ² |
| m ² | square meters | 1.2 | square yards | yd ² |
| km ² | square kilometers | 0.4 | square miles | mi ² |
| ha | hectares (10,000 m ²) | 2.5 | acres | |
| MASS (weight) | | | | |
| g | grams | 0.035 | ounces | oz |
| kg | kilograms | 2.2 | pounds | lb |
| t | tonnes (1000 kg) | 1.1 | short tons | |
| VOLUME | | | | |
| ml | milliliters | 0.03 | fluid ounces | fl oz |
| l | liters | 2.1 | pints | pt |
| l | liters | 1.06 | quarts | qt |
| l | liters | 0.26 | gallons | gal |
| m ³ | cubic meters | 35 | cubic feet | ft ³ |
| m ³ | cubic meters | 1.3 | cubic yards | yd ³ |
| TEMPERATURE (exact) | | | | |
| °C | Celsius temperature | 9/5 (then add 32) | Fahrenheit temperature | °F |



*1 in = 2.54 (exactly). For other exact conversions and more detailed tables, see NBS Misc. Publ. 286, Units of Weights and Measures, Price \$2.25, SD Catalog No. C13.10286.

PREFACE

This document is intended to serve as a working guide to individuals and organizations involved in efforts to gain legislative approval of general safety belt usage laws or child restraint laws. The information contained in this handbook falls into two basic categories:

- Information and data to support arguments on behalf of occupant restraint legislation and to overcome the objections and reservations of non-supporters.
- Strategies, tactics, and methods for communicating the above data to state legislators, traffic safety officials, police officials, media representatives, and others.

The focus of the manual is on developing effective state level campaigns to obtain passage of occupant restraint laws. Accordingly, the handbook is designed for a variety of potential users, including state legislators, state traffic safety officials, and members of the general public.

This handbook was prepared by Teknekron, Inc. under Department of Transportation Contract Number DOT-HS-7-01644. The handbook was written by William B. Wilson with assistance from the following Teknekron staff and associates: Robert Berger, David Heatt, and James Swinehart. Editorial support was provided by Ernest Byrd, Lorraine Davis, and Patti Lowery. In addition, Teknekron wishes to acknowledge the invaluable assistance and support of Pete Ziegler and William Foulis of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Finally, appreciation is expressed to the many state legislators, traffic safety officials, media representatives, police officials, civic groups, and members of the public who graciously assisted us in preparing this document.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

For more than twenty years, the traffic safety community has been working to reduce the number and consequences of traffic accidents. For the most part, they have been very successful; accident rates are lower, automobiles and highways are safer, and driver skills have improved. Still every year thousands of people are killed and millions are injured in automobile accidents, and traffic accidents continue to be a major problem confronting American society.

The area where traffic safety officials have been the most unsuccessful is in getting motorists to wear safety belts. In a recent national survey, only 14 percent of the driving public was observed wearing safety belts. (1) As a direct consequence, countless people are being unnecessarily killed or injured, and the American public is being penalized millions of dollars in needless taxes and insurance premiums.

After experiencing varying degrees of success with public education or information campaigns and the use of reminder/warning devices in cars, many traffic safety experts and officials have concluded that passage of a law requiring the wearing of belts is the best way to increase the use of lap and shoulder belts. The argument for occupant restraint legislation has been bolstered by the success of such legislation in many countries (e.g., Australia, Canada and France); however, efforts to pass occupant restraint laws in the United States have had minimal success.

Despite the commitment and encouragement of the Federal government and many other traffic safety organizations, the states have not enacted occupant restraint legislation (Tennessee, however, has adopted a child restraint law). Much of the opposition to occupant restraint legislation is based on

misinformation and a misunderstanding of the issue. In addition, the efforts of individuals and organizations to promote passage of occupant restraint laws have been hampered by a common pattern of repeated errors. This handbook has been prepared in an effort to correct the misunderstanding surrounding occupant restraint laws and to improve the chances for legislative approval of such legislation. Most of all, it attempts to encourage further and stronger efforts on behalf of occupant restraint laws.

OVERVIEW OF HANDBOOK PURPOSE AND CONTENT

The purpose of this handbook is to aid individuals and organizations at the state level in launching an effective program to gain passage of an occupant restraint law.* The handbook contains information to assist its users in organizing a safety belt usage law campaign, in addressing the concerns and/or enlisting the support of various target audiences (e.g., state legislators, the police, and the general public), and in working with the media (e.g., newspapers, radio, and television). Data is also provided to support arguments made on behalf of occupant restraint laws and to answer the arguments of opponents.

The handbook has three specific objectives:

- To aid individuals and organizations at the state level in their efforts to gain passage of occupant restraint laws.
- To succinctly present and summarize the most effective data and information available in support of occupant restraint laws.
- To improve communications in the area of highway safety--particularly on the issue of occupant restraint legislation.

Who Will Use the Manual?

This text is written for proponents of occupant restraint laws. A proponent is someone or some group that recognizes the benefits of wearing safety belts

*As used herein and throughout this text, the term occupant restraint law/legislation refers to both general safety belt usage laws and to child restraint laws; however, the primary focus of this handbook is on safety belt usage laws.

and the need for occupant restraint legislation. More importantly, a proponent is an individual or group willing to exert the necessary time and effort required to gain enactment of an occupant restraint law. Based on past experience, this could be a state legislator, a state traffic safety official, a private citizen, or an organization. In short, this handbook can be used by anyone or any group interested in initiating and implementing an organized effort to promote the passage of an occupant restraint law.

How to Use the Manual

The handbook attempts to maximize the involvement of individuals and groups at the state level in efforts to pass safety belt usage legislation. Consequently, it is general and flexible enough to be applicable in different states with different resources. The information presented in the manual attempts to address the variety of individual state concerns, resources, and needs. In addition, great emphasis has been placed on organizational/process types of information throughout the text.

To make the most effective use of the handbook, proponents should:

- Read the handbook closely, paying particular attention to the problem areas and courses of action discussed.
- Analyze the problems and concerns relevant to their particular state.
- Review the handbook for suggestions and techniques appropriate to their state and its problems.
- Assess their available resources, prioritize objectives, and select an appropriate strategy.
- Develop an information data base on their state and use this data to tailor arguments presented in the handbook to their state.
- Organize and initiate a safety belt usage law campaign and use the handbook as a guide in conducting this campaign.

Supporting Research for the Handbook

This manual culminates more than fourteen months of intensive research. An extensive review and evaluation of existing research relative to safety belts and safety belt usage laws was followed by an in-depth examination of past attempts in the United States to pass safety belt usage laws and of the history and impact of safety belt usage laws in foreign countries. State legislators, (proponents and opponents), state traffic safety officials, state police officials, members of the general public, and media representatives were interviewed to ascertain their attitudes and concerns regarding occupant restraint legislation. In addition, the major sections of this handbook were tested for persuasive appeal among various target audiences (e.g., state legislators) and found effective in increasing support for occupant restraint legislation. Moreover, information and data contained in the handbook are based on empirical studies and reflect the state-of-the-art in safety-belt research. In some areas, the information presented herein is original research (e.g., procedures and techniques for enforcing a safety belt usage law) conducted especially to address important reservations of key individuals and groups regarding safety belt usage laws. For a complete explication of the research conducted in support of this handbook, readers are referred to the companion volume of this report--Final Report on Safety Belt Usage Attitude Study.

Manual Content: What It Is and Is Not

The handbook is divided into four chapters and three appendices. This introductory chapter provides an overview of the manual and a brief history on the issue of occupant restraint legislation. Chapter II discusses the need for an organized effort on behalf of safety belt usage laws and various ways that a safety belt usage or child restraint law campaign can be organized. Chapter III analyzes the concerns and objections of key target groups and provides arguments and data for convincing members of these groups to support occupant restraint laws. In addition, the chapter suggests procedures for involving the respective groups in a safety belt usage or child restraint law campaign. Chapter IV looks at the role of the media in such campaigns.

The three appendices contain special purpose information on the issue of occupant restraint legislation. Appendix A develops the case for occupant restraint laws in its most logical, comprehensive, and persuasive form. In addition, Appendix A is specially designed to be reproduced and distributed as an informational booklet. Appendix B contains valuable information on how a safety belt usage law should be drafted, and Appendix C lists references and additional sources of support for proponent efforts.

This book is intended as a guide, and every attempt has been made to make it a good one. However, it is no substitute for the hard work that must be performed, at the state level, in order to obtain passage of a safety belt usage law. It provides information and data to support the case for occupant restraint legislation and it provides suggestions on how to promote the passage of a safety belt usage law, but it can not provide the patience, insight, and dedication that is even more vital to a successful effort on behalf of occupant restraint legislation. These qualities must be provided by those who use this handbook.

THE HISTORY OF SAFETY BELT USAGE LEGISLATION

Experiments by automotive engineers and traffic safety researchers during the 1940s and 1950s first demonstrated the value of seat belts for reducing accident-related deaths and injuries. Based on this research, the National Safety Council issued its first recommendation (1956) that motorists use seat belts, and the major automobile manufacturers began offering safety belts as optional accessories.

In 1961, Wisconsin became the first state to require the installation of safety belts in all cars sold or registered in the state. By 1964, seventeen other states had enacted similar laws, and safety belts had become standard equipment on U.S. manufactured cars. Following passage of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, the Federal government promulgated vehicle safety standards requiring all passenger cars to be equipped with lap and shoulder belts for front-seat passengers and safety belts

at each seating position. In 1971, these requirements were extended to multi-purpose passenger vehicles, trucks, and buses.

As safety belts became more available, increased efforts were made to convince people to wear them. To bolster usage, numerous safety belt advertising campaigns and educational programs were conducted (e.g., mass media advertising, endorsements by medical authorities, and educational appeals); the results were minimal. Safety belt usage continued to hover around 20 percent. Consequently, traffic safety officials sought other ways to increase belt use: one way was safety belt usage laws.

Safety Belt Usage Laws

Victoria, Australia was the first jurisdiction to try safety belt usage laws. Following enactment of the law in 1971, safety belt usage by drivers and passengers rose from approximately 20 percent to around 75 percent. Surveys in 1974 showed usage to approximate 80 percent. As a result, accident-related deaths and injuries have been reduced by 25 and 20 percent respectively.

Ontario, Canada also experienced drastic reductions in traffic fatalities and injuries following its enactment of a safety belt usage law (1975). Despite large increases in the number of cars on the road and miles driven, traffic fatalities were 17 percent lower, and traffic injuries declined by 15 percent.* As of January 1, 1977, twenty-one countries had enacted mandatory safety belt usage laws.

In the U.S., efforts to mandate safety belt usage have been unsuccessful. Between 1972 and 1977, over 110 safety belt usage bills were introduced in some 32 state legislatures--none passed. In 1973, Congress authorized the payment of incentive grants and awards to states willing to adopt a safety belt usage law, but only Puerto Rico responded. In 1974, Congress failed to re-appropriate funds for the incentive awards. Gradually, state interest in safety belt usage legislation has diminished; in 1977 only six legislatures debated the issue.

*This reduction is also partially attributable to the reduction of highway speed limits in Ontario.

However, a number of "limited" safety belt usage laws have been passed. Tennessee has enacted a child restraint law for children under age four. California requires all occupants of driver education vehicles to use safety belts, and school bus drivers must wear belts in Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New York. In Maine, all school bus occupants must wear a safety belt.* Moreover, several states require state employees, officials, and policemen to wear safety belts during the course of official duties (e.g., Michigan, Minnesota and Montana). Furthermore, the Federal Highway Administration requires all truck drivers engaged in interstate commerce to wear safety belts.

*Unfortunately, school buses do not come equipped with safety belts.

REFERENCES - CHAPTER I

1. Opinion Research Corporation. Safety Belt Usage: Survey of Cars in the Traffic Population. U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. November 1978.

CHAPTER II

ORGANIZING A CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE SAFETY BELT USAGE LEGISLATION

With a few exceptions, there has never been a well-organized attempt to enact a safety belt usage law in the United States. Past attempts have typically been "spear-headed" by a single legislator supported by a few highway safety officials. Outside support from public agencies (e.g., the police), professional organizations, the general public, and the media usually has been lacking. Within the legislatures, inadequate communications and unconvincing data have characterized efforts to gain passage of a safety belt usage bill. In short, most U.S. campaigns have been fragmented and too narrowly focussed (see Chapter III for details); consequently, they have been unable to overcome the substantial amount of misunderstanding and opposition associated with the issue.

If a campaign to enact a safety belt usage law is to succeed, these deficiencies must be overcome. Experience has shown that organization and planning are vital attributes of a successful campaign. This chapter discusses the major features of organizing, initiating, and conducting a campaign to achieve passage of an occupant restraint law. Topics covered include organizational objectives, alternative organizational structures, and campaign planning strategies. The intent is to provide an overview of how a safety belt usage law campaign should be structured for maximum effectiveness.

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

The objectives of a safety belt usage law campaign are two-fold: 1) to build legislative, official, and public support for occupant restraint legislation, and 2) to integrate that support into a comprehensive and effective effort to gain passage of a safety belt usage law. Accomplishing these objectives requires developing the strongest possible case for mandatory safety belt usage and communicating that case to legislators, public officials, professional groups, and the public. It also involves

conducting the campaign in a manner that reinforces promotional focal points and unifies promotional activities. Finally, it requires that the individual concerns, interests, and objections of the respective parties be addressed.

Performance of these tasks requires an organized, systematic, and coordinated effort. The organization may consist of one person (e.g., a state legislator) or it may be quite complex (e.g., a coalition); but regardless of organizational structure, it must establish priorities, define tasks, coordinate functions, and mobilize resources. The task is difficult, but if the campaign proceeds in a systematic and orderly fashion, it has a good chance of success. Proponents must avail themselves of every opportunity to state and repeat their point of view, until such time that enough legislative, official and public support exists to enact occupant restraint legislation.

CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

The overall strategy of a campaign endorsing a restraint usage law should be predicated upon the following principles:

- Organize and plan the campaign in advance of the legislative session;
- Present the case for a safety belt usage law to legislators individually through personal contact;
- Tailor the case for a safety belt usage law to the needs of the state;
- Focus the campaign on both chambers of legislature; and
- Develop a broad base of outside support for the legislation.

In most states, the legislature meets for three months once a year. In others, the legislature only meets every other year; fewer than a dozen states have full-time legislators. Once the legislative session convenes, little time is available for campaign organization. Thus, campaign organization and planning should be accomplished well before the start of the

legislative session, so that proponents can devote their full attention to the proposed legislation during the session.

Most legislators are unaware of their state's highway safety problems and of its need for occupant restraint measures. At first glance, many have serious reservations about such measures. To gain the legislative support necessary to enact a restraint usage law requires educating a substantial number of legislators on the consequences of motor vehicle accidents, the effectiveness of safety belts, and the merits of occupant restraint laws.

However, committee hearings and floor debates cannot be the only forum for accomplishing this task. Unless a legislator is a member of a committee, he will seldom attend its meetings. Furthermore, committee hearings usually are not transcribed. Consequently, the majority of state legislators are first exposed to an issue during floor debates. In most cases this procedure is adequate but not in the case of occupant restraint legislation. Because of the complex and emotional nature of the issue, using the often rushed and unfocused forum of the floor debate as the primary mechanism to gain legislative approval does not work. A personal contact should be made with each member of the legislature and the issue carefully explained to each.

Legislators are elected to serve the needs of their constituents; it is also necessary for a safety belt usage law campaign to serve these needs. Arguments and data to be presented on behalf of a safety belt usage law should be framed in terms of the state's particular needs. How many lives would the state save? What would be its cost savings? Such information adds relevance and meaning to otherwise dry statistics.

Several times a safety belt usage law has passed one chamber of a state legislature only to fail in the other (e.g., Minnesota, New Jersey, and New York): proponent efforts on behalf of the bill too often focus principally on the first chamber; in the second chamber, the bill may run into the same resistance it encountered in the first, but may lack a strong proponent to promote it. Moreover, by the time the bill gets to the second chamber, the legislative session is nearly finished and inadequate

time remains to generate support. To avoid this situation, the safety belt usage law campaign must present its case for occupant restraint legislation to members of both chambers concurrently.

Obviously, a safety belt usage law campaign needs to include as many supporters and participants as possible; however, the support and involvement of some is particularly crucial. Experience indicates that a state legislator who is an active proponent of restraint usage laws is invaluable for escorting the proposed bill through the legislature and for personally contacting other legislators on its behalf. In addition, a legislator generally has ready access to the media and a better understanding of the legislative process.

The involvement of state highway safety personnel, including the Traffic Safety Coordinator, is also critical. These officials can provide data on the state's accident situation and its need for occupant restraint legislation. Moreover, they may have access to funds for conducting the campaign, and they provide a necessary link to the state governor. Finally, they are in contact with and able to enlist support from many professional and civic organizations interested in traffic safety problems.

The support and involvement of the police and state medical groups is also extremely valuable. Many legislators are troubled by the problems of enforcing a safety belt usage law: the endorsement of state and local police considerably eases their minds. Medical organizations tend to be very influential with both the public and legislators. In addition, they have an abiding interest in traffic safety and can provide valuable information on the effectiveness of safety belts and the need for occupant restraint laws.

The essential groups and individuals to involve in the campaigns are state legislators, highway safety officials, police officials and medical groups. However many others' contributions to the campaign should be sought if resources and time permit. Presented below is a complete list of those whose support should be enlisted:

- State legislators
- State highway safety officials
- Police officials
- Professional organizations (especially medical organizations, insurance groups, and ambulance/rescue organizations)
- Civic organizations (especially traffic safety and parent organizations)
- Members of the general public

In general, the safety belt usage law campaign should concentrate on generating state support. Support from national organizations (e.g., the American Seat Belt Council) can be valuable, but in many cases, state legislators discount their arguments. The same arguments and data have much more impact when presented by a state organization. Still, national organizations are valuable sources of data, ideas, and possibly funding.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

A campaign to achieve passage of a safety belt usage law may be structured in one of four ways:

- Legislative proponents can organize the campaign;
- A state agency or group can initiate it;
- A public interest organization can sponsor the effort; or
- A coalition of proponents can be formed.

Previous efforts to enact occupant restraint laws in the U.S. have generally been organized and led by state legislators. Such campaigns are advantageous in the sense that legislative support is a prerequisite for passage of a restraint law, and probably the greatest influence on state legislators is their colleagues. However, because of pressing responsibilities in many other areas, it is difficult for legislative proponents to devote their full attention to developing outside support and resources for their efforts; without this outside support (especially from police agencies), there is a tendency for state legislators to view proponent arguments as unconvincing.

State traffic safety officials have sponsored several legislative initiatives on behalf of occupant restraint laws. Such attempts require a legislator to introduce the proposed bill, but state safety officials are responsible for promoting the legislation (this is usually done by the state Traffic Safety Coordinator). A drawback of this approach is that promotion of the proposed law is confined to the legislature's formal procedure (i.e., the committees). Generally, no one is available to speak directly with other legislators and personally seek their support.

While public interest organizations have been involved in many state efforts to pass a safety belt usage law, no organization has ever mounted a campaign on its own to get the state legislature to enact such a law. However, a Tennessee medical group did succeed in obtaining the enactment of a state child restraint law, so the possibility does exist. The major advantage of this structure over the others is its ability to generate public support for the issue. Not only is the organization composed of citizens, but their efforts on behalf of safety belt usage legislation tends to be well received by other members of the public and by legislators. The disadvantage is that this approach is extremely difficult to organize. There is also a problem in getting a bill introduced in the state legislature.

Proponents of compulsory safety belt use also can form a coalition to seek passage of the necessary legislation. A coalition structure is preferable, because a broad-based campaign allows the organization to draw support from many different quarters (e.g., civic and professional groups as well as the legislature and traffic safety officials). This structure also combines the advantages, without the drawbacks, of the other organizational forms. Furthermore, the extra human and other resources of a coalition allow the groups to focus on additional target audiences, to accomplish more tasks, and to conduct a more comprehensive campaign.

CHAPTER III

GENERATING SUPPORT FOR OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LEGISLATION

Legislative proposals requiring general usage of safety belts by motor vehicle occupants have been defeated in some thirty-five U.S. states. Most of these bills failed to get out of committee. In four states, safety belt usage laws have managed to pass one chamber of a state legislature, but the legislation has never been approved by both chambers. At the same time, passage of safety belt usage laws does not appear to be a dead issue. A few states are still considering such legislation; moreover, Tennessee has succeeded in enacting a child restraint law. Many state legislators are still dedicated to the idea, and safety belt usage laws are widely supported among doctors, civic groups, and traffic safety officials.

Still most state legislators, police officials, and members of the general public have serious reservations regarding safety belt usage laws--concerns that have rarely been adequately addressed. The proponent case for occupant restraint legislation often lacks a firm empirical foundation. Important data needed to convince legislators, police, and others to support restraint usage laws have been unavailable or nonexistent. In addition, proponents have often overlooked crucial influences on the legislative process that affect the passage of a safety belt usage law.

Recent research indicates that much more support for occupant restraint legislation can be generated, if the deficiencies noted above are corrected.* The intent of this chapter is to help proponents make these corrections. The chapter analyzes the key attitudes and objections of major opponent groups regarding safety belt usage laws and provides information and data to mediate their concerns. Effective arguments for convincing opponents to support occupant restraint legislation are also

*The primary emphasis in this chapter is on generating support for a safety belt usage law, however, much of the information and suggestions provided in the chapter would also be applicable to efforts to gain passage of a child restraint law.

presented. In addition, the chapter suggests tactics and procedures for proponents to follow in persuading groups and individuals to support restraint usage laws.

What Groups are Important and Why

Occupant restraint legislation is a complex issue; one confounded by many social and technical considerations. In deciding such issues, legislators ask themselves three key questions:

- What is the merit and propriety of the proposed law?
- Can it be effectively implemented?
- How will the public react to its passage?

How these questions are answered determines whether the proposed law is enacted?

In the case of occupant restraint legislation, these questions are never decided by legislators without carefully considering the points-of-view of all involved parties. These parties include:

- State legislators,
- Police officials,
- Members of the general public, and
- Professional/civic organizations.

The final position of the legislature on occupant restraint legislation is an amalgamation of the viewpoints of all four groups.

Accordingly, this chapter is organized around the above groups (i.e., state legislators, police officials, the general public, and professional/civic organizations). While passage of a safety belt usage law basically depends on the ability of proponents to gain the support of the state legislature, obtaining sufficient legislative support is largely conditioned on winning the support of the latter three groups. In order to obtain sufficient legislative support to gain passage of a safety belt usage law, proponents must gain the support of the other three target groups or at least counteract their opposition. Their support, in turn, can aid proponents in persuading state legislators to support occupant restraint legislation.

GAINING THE SUPPORT OF STATE LEGISLATORS

As a general rule, some legislative support for safety belt usage laws exists in every state. Typically, these legislators will be frequent safety belt wearers and will have an above average understanding of their state's traffic safety problems. Furthermore, most will be somewhat aware of the benefits of occupant restraint legislation and the success foreign countries have had with such laws.

In contrast, there will also exist in most states a contingent of legislators who are unalterably opposed to mandatory safety belt use, because they personally dislike belts and believe them to be ineffective and dangerous. These legislators readily discount arguments made on behalf of either safety belts or occupant restraints laws; moreover, their opposition is often emotional and highly subjective.

Most state legislators, however, fall into a third category. These legislators believe in the value of wearing safety belts (although most report infrequent usage), but they are skeptical about the idea of compulsory usage. These legislators are concerned about the more substantive issues associated with compulsory safety belt usage (e.g., enforcement problems and whether safety belt usage laws constitute excessive government involvement in the private affairs of citizens). Nevertheless, they are willing to listen to and consider arguments on behalf of safety belt usage legislation, and recent research indicates that many can be persuaded to support such legislation.

The proponent group of legislators tends to be very small, but it is among this group that efforts to gain passage of a safety belt usage law must start. Ideally, one or more proponent legislators will undertake to initiate and organize a safety belt usage law campaign. If not, campaign organizers must seek out their participation. Proponent legislators can usually be identified by contacting state highway safety

officials or members of legislative highway safety committees. If a safety belt usage law has been previously introduced in the state, legislative records can often identify who sponsored and/or supported the proposed law. Once identified, all proponent legislators should be invited to participate in the campaign to gain passage of a safety belt usage law.

At this point, proponents must turn their attention towards the opponent legislators. In most states, the great majority of state legislators fall into that category of opponents who value safety belts but who oppose usage laws. It is on this group that proponents must concentrate their efforts, for many can be convinced to support a safety belt usage law. However, the most active resistance to the legislation will usually come from those opponents who personally dislike belts. Proponents of general safety belt usage must learn to recognize the differences between these two opponent groups and respond accordingly.

To succeed in gaining passage of an occupant restraint law, four tasks must be accomplished:

- The case for occupant restraint legislation must be fully presented and completely substantiated.
- The arguments of opponents against restraint usage laws must be effectively countered.
- Obstacles and "pinch-points" in the legislative process that may prevent passage of the legislation must be overcome.
- Outside support for occupant restraint legislation must be mobilized and deployed on behalf of the proposed law.

What follows is a discussion of these tasks and what proponents must do to accomplish them.

THE CASE FOR OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LAWS

A critical aspect of legislative efforts on behalf of safety belt usage legislation is substantiating and presenting the proponent view point.

This process involves more than proving to the legislature that occupant restraint legislation will substantially reduce traffic-related deaths and injuries; proponents must also demonstrate that occupant restraint laws will result in a tax benefit to the state and that other approaches for increasing safety belt use are not as good.

The case for occupant restraint legislation is based on six arguments:

- The human tragedy and financial costs associated with traffic-related injuries and deaths are a serious state and local problem.
- Safety belts (when worn) are the most effective countermeasure for reducing traffic fatalities and injuries.
- Safety belt usage laws are effective in getting motorists to wear safety belts, whereas voluntary approaches are not.
- Occupant restraint legislation will substantially reduce state highway fatalities and injuries.
- Safety belt usage laws will result in significant tax benefits to the state (e.g., a tax savings of over \$12,000 per fatality).
- The state legislature has a compelling responsibility to the state's taxpayers and its motorists to require general safety belt usage.

Each of these arguments is examined in detail and substantiated by the most recent information available in Appendix A. Rather than repeat this discussion, the reader is referred to Appendix A. Note that Appendix A is designed so that it can be reproduced and distributed as an informational pamphlet on occupant restraint laws. However, proponents also need to supplement the information presented in Appendix A with as much local data as possible. For example, proponents should use the information in Appendix A to calculate what the tax savings to their state would be with a safety belt usage law. In addition, proponents should attempt to obtain collaborating statements and/or testimony from state highway officials, police personnel, physicians, businessmen, and civic leaders on arguments presented on behalf of occupant restraint legislation. This aspect of the proponent case is discussed in a subsequent section.

ARGUMENTS MADE AGAINST SAFETY BELT USAGE LAWS

Ironically, the debate between legislative opponents and proponents over the issue of safety belt usage laws usually turns upon the arguments of opponents rather than proponents. There are two reasons for this. First, proponents have often failed to articulate all the arguments that support occupant restraint legislation--usually because they have lacked vital information needed to substantiate them, but in a few cases the reason has been bad management. This handbook and the data sources it references should correct this problem.

Second, there is in the United States a growing concern among state legislators and the general public that government has become too big and too pervasive. At first glance, safety belt usage laws seem to perpetuate this trend, and opponents have seized upon this impression to argue against occupant restraint legislation. In fact, most opponents do not attempt to refute the proponent case but argue instead that safety belt usage laws represent excessive government.

Because the legislative debate does center on the opponent point-of-view, proponents must be prepared to counter their objections. Generally, four major objections are raised against occupant legislation. In the order of their importance, these are:

- Safety belt usage laws represent excessive government involvement in the private affairs of citizens.
- Safety belt usage laws are unenforceable, unworkable, and will be widely disobeyed.
- Safety belts are ineffective in preventing deaths and injuries resulting from traffic accidents.
- The public is opposed to mandatory safety belt usage and does not want such laws enacted.

The Excessive Government Objection

The excessive government argument is the most powerful; primarily because it is an opinion rather than a fact. The philosophical arguments on behalf of occupant restraint legislation are equally as strong as any that can be made against it, but many legislators are worried that individual rights are gradually being eroded and that safety belt usage laws would exacerbate this trend. A major corollary of this argument is that the individual's decision to wear a safety belt is strictly a personal matter and without social consequences.

However, the excessive government argument is a false issue. Historically, there are many precedents for safety belt usage laws. For example, social security legislation requires involuntary contributions from everyone, and many communities require homeowners to install smoke detectors. Traffic safety has always been regulated by the government; passage of occupant restraint legislation will not mean bigger government, but it will mean less expensive government.

Proponents must counter the excessive government argument by keeping the debate focussed on traffic safety issues. When opponents raise the excessive government argument, proponents should respond with an appropriate philosophical argument that supports passage of a safety belt usage law, and reiterate the benefits to be realized from its passage. The opponent objection will be neutralized, and the debate will remain focussed on proponent arguments. At some point, the debate will begin to focus exclusively on the merits of occupant restraint legislation, and proponents will have gained the advantage. Appendix A contains an extensive discussion of the philosophic issues associated with occupant restraint laws including several arguments that proponents may use to counter the excessive government objection.

The Enforcement Objection

The question of enforcement troubles both proponents and opponents. Legislative sponsors of safety belt usage laws argue that a substantial proportion of drivers and vehicle occupants will obey the law; and therefore even if the law can not be enforced, it will be beneficial. Opponent legislators maintain that laws which can not be enforced are disobeyed and create disrespect for government and the legal system. Some legislative opponents are bothered by possible administrative difficulties (e.g., proving the charge in court and counter-lawsuits) and by possible public backlash against police agencies over enforcement efforts. Other legislators express concern that safety belt usage laws may have an adverse impact on accident liability claims--that damage awards could be reduced by the courts, because the victim was not wearing a safety belt.

The fact is that safety belt usage laws can be enforced; moreover, no great effort is required to do so. Enforcement procedures and techniques are discussed in the next section of this chapter (i.e., How to Gain Police Support for Occupant Restraint Laws); thus, they are not covered here. Proponents need to familiarize themselves with these techniques and should be prepared to discuss them; however, the best way is to counter this objection is to gain the support of state police officials and have them certify that the laws are enforceable.

The Effectiveness Objection

Legislative opponents of occupant restraint laws consistently underestimate the effectiveness of safety belts. Although the majority believe in the overall value of wearing safety belts, myths about the dangers of entrapment as well as misconceptions regarding ejection and when belts are needed are prevalent. Overwhelmingly, opponents report infrequent or no use of safety belts--many legislators think the dangers of belt wearing out-weigh the benefits. Opponents also tend to underestimate the problem

of low belt usage rates, and most have only a minimal knowledge of traffic safety problems in their state.

To overcome this objection, it is necessary to educate legislators about the benefits of wearing safety belts and the possible consequences of a traffic accident. Volumes of traffic safety research materials are available that prove the value of wearing safety belts (see Appendix C), but in most cases, the synopsis of the literature provided in Appendix A will suffice. In addition, proponents must collect a few facts on the accident situation in their particular state, and what it costs the state in terms of human lives, injuries, and less taxes. Most of this information can be obtained from the state's Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) or Traffic Safety Coordinator.

The No Public Demand Objection

A few opponent legislators will argue against safety belt usage legislation on the grounds that such legislation is unpopular. This argument is often used to support opponent contentions that occupant restraint laws will not be obeyed. The best way to neutralize this objection is to avoid it. That is, proponents should attempt to generate public support for the legislation. Suggestions on how to accomplish this are presented later in this chapter and in Chapter IV.

If the objection is raised, proponents should point out that a number of public opinion surveys show considerable support for mandatory safety belt use (see Appendix A). In fact, the safety belt usage law campaign might consider conducting its own survey, if it has the resources. In addition, experiences indicate that public acceptance tends to increase once the initial shock regarding the law passes. Besides, legislative issues should be decided on their merits not on their popularity.

The quintessential opponent viewpoint is a mixture of all four arguments. At times, the arguments become so interwoven it is impossible to separate them. Overcoming opponent objections as well as presenting the case for safety belt usage laws is a difficult and time-consuming process. Proponents must be prepared to respond to their opponent's objection with sound rational arguments backed up with concrete data. Not every legislator can be persuaded to vote for safety belt usage legislation, but a majority can.

OVERCOMING LEGISLATIVE OBSTACLES TO THE PASSAGE OF A SAFETY BELT USAGE LAW

In addition to arguing the case for occupant restraint laws and refuting the objections of opponents, proponents must overcome a variety of legislative obstacles that can prevent passage of a safety belt usage law. Overall, the legislative process tends to work to the advantage of those legislators who oppose safety belt usage laws and to the disadvantage of those who support such laws. Innovative techniques and extra efforts are required to overcome this disadvantage.

There is a problem of ensuring that all legislators are properly exposed to the proponent's facts and arguments. Sponsors of occupant restraint legislation usually rely upon committee hearings and floor debates in order to present facts and develop the issues. However, few legislators attend the hearings of committees they do not serve on, and the issue of safety belt usage legislation is too complex to be fully articulated during the floor debates (most of which last less than 20 minutes). Consequently, many legislators cast their vote without fully understanding the issue.

Given the shortcomings of committee hearings and floor debates, proponents must devise other ways to reach members of the legislature. Probably the most successful technique is personal, one-to-one lobbying by proponent legislators. These legislators would set-up appointments to meet directly

with other legislators to explain to them the bill's purpose, answer their questions, and solicit their support. Informational literature on safety belt usage laws, such as reprints of Appendix A, may also be left with each legislator. This procedure assures that all legislators voting on the proposed law are aware of the benefits associated with a safety belt usage law. At this time, proponents can also personally respond to any reservations regarding occupant restraint legislation that the legislator may have.

A second problem inherent in the legislative process is that a proposed safety belt usage law must go through the committee hearing and floor debate process twice--once in the House chamber and once in the Senate chamber. Once the bill passes the first chamber, it usually runs into the same resistance it encountered in the first. Usually the legislative session is nearly over by this time, and there is insufficient time to personally contact each member of the second chamber. Consequently, the bill is defeated.

As discussed in Chapter II, this problem can be corrected by working both chambers of the legislature concurrently. The safety belt usage law campaign should include members of both legislative chambers; if possible, a safety belt usage bill should be introduced in both chambers of the legislature. Remember also that any changes made in the second chamber must go back to the first for approval; opponents could try to use this tactic to amend the bill to death.

Proponent efforts are also hindered by the relative abstractness of the arguments for occupant restraint legislation. Proponent arguments center around statistics and numerical data (e.g., number of traffic deaths and injuries, percentage of safety belt usage, societal costs, etc.); the true reality of the problem is often obscured.

To make this data meaningful and understandable, proponents must "personalize" it as much as possible, and case histories seem to be the best way of

doing this. Case histories involve the personal accounts of accident victims about how safety belts work and about the suffering and financial costs of accidents. These case histories add drama to proponent arguments and have proven very effective. In addition, case histories also serve to counter opponent arguments that safety belts do not work and that safety belts are not needed.

A number of other problems in the legislative process also handicap proponent efforts on behalf of a safety belt usage law. Many critical points exist in the legislative process where a strategically placed individual or minority coalition can easily block a bill. In addition, there is a large amount of turnover in state legislatures. Thus a sizeable proportion of the legislature will be unfamiliar with carryover safety belt usage legislation or such legislation previously introduced but not passed. Finally, in most states being legislator is a part-time job. Many legislators have no staff and few resources. Consequently, keeping informed on an issue is a major problem.

These problems are not insurmountable, but they do require supporters of occupant restraint legislation to exert an extra effort. To be effective, proponents must organize, develop a legislative strategy, personally contact each legislator, and work both chambers of the legislature. This is a lot to ask, but it is the most effective way for proponents to present the case for safety belt usage legislation.

DEVELOPING OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LEGISLATION

Outside support for a safety belt usage law is extremely valuable to proponent efforts. For example, state legislators pay an inordinate amount of attention to the reaction of their constituents; a few letters of endorsement from them can be very beneficial. In addition, arguments made on behalf of occupant restraint legislation carry substantially more weight, if they are also supported

by people knowledgeable in this area (e.g., physicians, police, state highway safety officials, etc.). Accordingly, developing outside support for occupant restraint legislation is a major purpose for organizing a safety belt usage law campaign (see Chapter II) as well as a key task in gaining legislative approval of a safety belt usage law.

There are four major sources of outside support for a safety belt usage law: the police, the general public, professional/civic organizations (including state highway safety officials), and the media. Like state legislators, many individuals within these groups will have serious reservations regarding compulsory safety belt usage. Furthermore, it will be necessary to address their concerns in order to win their support. The subsequent sections of this chapter and all of Chapter IV are focussed on the data and arguments that proponents must present to these outside groups in order to gain their support.

At this point, proponents must also consider how this support can be factored into legislative efforts to gain passage of a safety belt usage law. A number of ways present themselves: testimony, letters, editorials, personal contacts, etc. These actions are not appropriate to all, but other actions are possible. Proponents need to determine how individuals within each group can best involve themselves in the campaign and develop appropriate courses of action for those individuals to follow. Suggestions on how to involve outside groups and individuals in a safety belt usage law campaign are also presented in subsequent parts of this chapter and in Chapter IV.

In seeking outside support, proponents must also carefully consider their resources. Cultivating the support of some groups is laborious and expensive (i.e., the general public); on the other hand, the support of some groups is practically essential (i.e., the police). Proponents should seek the support of those individuals whose support they feel is most important to their particular campaign and those whose support is easiest to obtain before devoting resources to gaining the support of the others.

HOW TO GAIN POLICE SUPPORT FOR OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LAWS

The support of law enforcement officials for occupant restraint legislation can be invaluable. Few groups are more respected by state legislators than the police. Moreover, the endorsement of those who must enforce the safety belt usage law considerably reduces any legislative opposition based on perceived enforcement problems. Police support effectively counters the claim that safety belt usage laws are unenforceable and emphasizes to legislators the critical need for such legislation. Finally, police cooperation will in itself result in more effective enforcement and a more successful law.

Although police support for a safety belt usage law is extremely desirable, it is not easy to obtain. While police officials strongly advocate safety belt use and many police departments require on-duty officers to wear safety belts, law enforcement agencies in the U.S. have been reluctant to endorse the idea of compulsory safety belt use.* In part, this is due to the fact that police support for proposed safety belt usage legislation has seldom been sought, but it also results from the fact that most police officials do not fully understand the issue.

WHY POLICE OFFICIALS MAY BE RELUCTANT TO SUPPORT OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LEGISLATION

The reluctance of law enforcement officials to endorse the concept of compulsory safety belt usage is somewhat puzzling. In essence, a safety belt usage law is not much different from many traffic safety regulations the police have endorsed (e.g., helmet laws for motorcyclists and safety

*The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), whose 11,000 members represent every major law enforcement district in the U.S., is an exception. In 1972, the IACP officially resolved that mandatory safety belt use laws should be adopted on a test-basis in a few states and agreed to fully support the test.

belt wearing for on-duty policemen). Moreover, law enforcement agencies and officials strongly believe in safety belts and advocate their use as important to the public health and safety. Similarly, police officials recognize that legally requiring people to wear seat belts would increase belt use if only because people tend to abide by most laws.

The major reason for police reluctance to support a safety belt usage law is their concern that occupant restraint laws are unenforceable. Ninety percent of the police officials who oppose occupant restraint laws cite this as their principal objection. The concern is also expressed by police officials who support mandatory safety belt usage. The image of widespread public disobedience and disrespect for the law causes many law enforcement officers to oppose safety belt usage laws, although they believe firmly in the safety benefits of wearing belts and admit that a law would cause more people to wear them. To gain police endorsement, the problem of enforceability must be addressed.

At first glance, the police position appears correct. After all, how can you tell whether a person is wearing his safety belt? He may be wearing the lap belt but not the shoulder belt. If stopped, the driver may get out of his car before the police officer can check for belt wearing, or he may simply claim he was wearing the belt but unbuckled it after stopping. Alternatively, motorists may try to quickly fasten the safety belt after stopping. In such eventualities, would a citation hold up in court?

THE ENFORCEMENT PROCESS

The experiences of foreign countries that have enacted safety belt usage laws show that motorist attempts to evade the law usually fail. Australian and Canadian police, for example, have achieved very high enforcement rates: Ontario police average one safety belt usage law citation for every sixth speeding charge. In fact, statistics indicate that

Ontario police have more success enforcing their safety belt usage law than U.S. police have in enforcing the 55 MPH speed limit (77 percent compliance for the safety belt usage law versus 48 percent compliance for the 55 MPH speed limit).⁽¹⁾ The point is that evading occupant restraint laws is not as easy as it first appears.

Yet these facts do not completely dispel all concern over enforcement. Questions remain as to how safety belt nonuse can be detected; how motorists' attempts to avoid detection by leaving the car or surreptitiously fastening the belt can be spotted, and what evidence is needed to convict offenders.

In Ontario, police employ a three step enforcement process involving detection, laying charges, and convicting offenders. The process is detailed below and answers most questions about how a safety belt usage law can be enforced. This process should be explained to law enforcement personnel as well as others who are reluctant to support occupant restraint legislation because of reservations about enforcement (e.g., state legislators). In most cases, the explanation will allay their concerns about enforcement, but if the concern persists have them talk directly with Ontario police officials.

Detecting Safety Belt Nonuse

Detection is the key to the entire enforcement process. Three modes of operation are used to detect violations of a safety belt usage law: patrol, spot checks, and accident investigations. Patrol is the easiest and most common form of detection. Motor vehicles manufactured after 1974 are equipped with a lap and shoulder belt that can not be separated. In the course of normal patrol activities, police officers can usually see whether occupants of post-1974 automobiles are wearing their safety belts; because they can easily observe the position of the shoulder belt for the driver and front-seat passenger.

Automobiles manufactured before 1974 are equipped with detachable lap and shoulder belts; thus, detecting safety belt nonuse is more difficult. If a motorist is stopped for another violation (e.g., speeding), police can also check for compliance with the safety belt usage law. If drivers and passengers are not wearing their safety belts, they can be cited, but in most cases, they are charged with the more severe violation and only given a warning for the safety belt violation.

The question often arises regarding what happens if a person who is stopped by a patrol officer attempts to put his belt on as the officer approaches; or what happens if a person gets out of his car to meet the officer? What constitutes evidence of non-safety belt usage?

First, if the officer has clear visual evidence of the violation, the situation is much the same as if the motorist were speeding but denies it. Second, police are generally able to discern attempts by motorists to fasten their safety belts after being stopped. The awkward motions and squirming that occurs as occupants attempt to locate their belts and fasten them before the officer approaches is readily observable. Then again the officer can check to see whether the safety belts are tied down, removed, fastened across the car seat, or otherwise unusable. In such cases, drivers can be cited for violating the safety belt usage law. Finally, in conversation many occupants often admit to not wearing their safety belts.

Spot checks involve directing randomly selected vehicles to the side of the road. Frequently this procedure is employed to check for vehicle inspection, driver registration, and alcohol involvement. Simultaneously, the police can check for safety belt use. While some jurisdictions, as a matter of policy, do not utilize spot checks, those that do will find them an effective means of ensuring compliance with a safety belt usage law.

At an accident scene, most people are out of their car by the time police arrive; however, during the course of accident investigations police are often able to detect whether vehicle occupants were wearing safety belts. By checking to see whether the safety belts are buckled across the seat, removed, hidden or tied down so as to be unusable, the police can determine whether they were worn at the time of the accident. In addition, certain injury patterns reveal whether the belts were used (e.g., ejection, head through windshield, or trapped in position other than occupant seat).

The Violation Charge

Assuming that the law goes into effect, and that some motorists are caught violating it, the next step in the enforcement process is technically referred to as "laying charges." Since there is currently no national precedent for such a law, there can be no absolute statement about what kind of charge will be laid for a violation. The wording of the charge will probably be something like, "Failure to use safety belt while operating a motor vehicle having such equipment." Early in the life of the law, offenders are usually issued a warning, and this warning becomes part of their permanent driving record. A second infraction could be treated as a moving violation, costing the offender points against his license, or the violation can be handled in the same way as a parking ticket: with a fine and a penalty for not paying it, but no points charged against the license.

The Conviction

Convicting a driver of violating the law will follow the pattern of convictions for speeding or failure to observe other traffic rules. In those countries where such laws exist, the charge is rarely contested, so the conviction is not a complicated process. In most cases, the policeman's report that he observed the car's occupant not wearing a safety belt is sufficient for conviction, but evidence can also be

introduced regarding belt type, condition of the safety belt, and/or occupant injury patterns to support the policeman's testimony.

Actions to Facilitate Enforcement

Enforcement is crucial to the success of an occupant restraint law. It is essential that police officers recognize the value of belt wearing and vigorously enforce the law. The following actions can help ensure an effective enforcement program:

- Consult with state, county, and local police officials before introducing the legislation.
- Ensure that police officials are well informed of the value of safety belts and how they work. Their commitment is very important. If an officer does not believe in the effectiveness of safety belts he cannot be expected to vigorously enforce the law.
- Provide the police with clear, well-written legislation.
- Make certain that police officials have a copy of the pending legislation.
- Work with police officials to develop a clear and unambiguous statement of what is expected from officers after legislation is introduced (e.g., warnings for a certain time, then firm enforcement of the legislation).

OTHER ARGUMENTS TO PRESENT TO POLICE OFFICIALS ON BEHALF OF SAFETY BELT USAGE LAWS

Convincing law enforcement officials that a safety belt usage law is enforceable and not substantially different from enforcing other laws whose violation is not immediately evident (e.g., requiring drivers to have valid licenses) may still be insufficient. Proponents must be prepared to argue the merits of a safety belt usage law as well as proving that the law is enforceable. But with police officials it is generally not necessary

to argue the case for wearing safety belts; thus proponents can concentrate on presenting the case for occupant restraint legislation.

Proponents need to present the following arguments and data to police officials on behalf of safety belt usage laws:

- The need for occupant restraint laws. Present information on the number of injuries and deaths that result from motor vehicle accidents and cite how low safety belt usage rates are in the United States. Explain that appeals for voluntary usage fail to increase usage rates (see Appendix A).
- The benefit of an occupant restraint law. Point out the social and economic costs of accidents and how many lives could be saved and injuries reduced by a safety belt usage law. Recount the successful experiences of foreign countries with such laws (including their enforcement efforts) and underscore the potential cost savings that could result from the legislation (see Appendix A).

If the police department has a policy requiring on-duty officers to wear safety belts, proponents should note this and point out that the concept of mandatory belt use coincides with such a policy. (Oddly, police officials never consider enforcement to be a problem with their own officers). Should police officials raise philosophical objections to requiring car occupants to wear safety belts, discuss with them the philosophical arguments that can be made on behalf of such laws (Appendix A). Also explain that self-protection laws are quite common (e.g., motorcycle helmet laws, laws that require smoke detectors in homes, and laws requiring car owners to carry insurance).

Finally, show the official that safety belt usage laws are supported by many different organizations, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and provide a list of the individuals and groups within the state who are supporting the legislation. Should all these measures fail, and the official remain resistant to supporting a safety belt

usage law, remember that in every state there are many different police departments and officials. If state police officials refuse to endorse the legislation, try to get an endorsement from county or city police officials.

INVOLVING POLICE OFFICIALS IN A SAFETY BELT USAGE LAW CAMPAIGN

The more evidence that state legislators have that law enforcement officials support and recognize the value of an occupant restraint law the more they will be inclined to also support such a law. For this reason, it is necessary to involve police officials in the campaign. This involvement can come through many channels, but the minimum requirement is an official departmental endorsement of the proposed legislation.

Endorsement procedures vary among states, but in most the protocol is simply to contact the head of the police agency and request his support. Generally, this official acts as the spokesperson for the department and makes final recommendations regarding endorsement on legislative issues, but some departments have a formal procedure for commenting on proposed legislation that involves review by a legislative analysis division. Their findings are then formally reported by the Commissioner to the legislature.

In addition to formally endorsing occupant restraint legislation, police personnel can perform several other activities to aid the passage of a safety belt usage law:

- Police officers can testify on behalf of the law at legislative hearings on the issue.
- Law enforcement officials can contact state legislators and other police officials to urge them to support a safety belt usage law.

- The police can call press conferences to announce their endorsement of the legislation and to explain why they support it.
- Police personnel can also speak before civic and public groups on behalf of the law.

All these activities should be suggested to law enforcement officials, but they should only perform those they feel comfortable doing.

THE GENERAL PUBLIC TARGET AUDIENCE

Public acceptance is an important issue in all legislative debates, but it is doubly so in the case of occupant restraint legislation. Public opposition can reduce the chances for enactment, but more importantly, widespread public disobedience of a safety belt usage law could negate a major reason for its passage (i.e., to get car occupants to wear their safety belts). The importance of the public acceptance issue is compounded by the fact that legislators are universally concerned about the possible political effects of supporting highly unpopular laws. The great majority of state legislators will overlook these impacts, if the law has overriding merits. If however public disapproval neutralizes the law's basis, there is no reason for a legislator to risk supporting it. Thus the public acceptance question is much more serious in the case of safety belt usage legislation than it is with most other legislative issues.

Because of its extreme importance, a safety belt usage law campaign must develop a strategy for increasing public acceptance of occupant restraint legislation and for mediating the negative effects of potential public opposition on legislative support for such legislation. This strategy involves two types of activities: (1) generating more favorable public attitudes toward safety belt usage laws, and (2) increasing public involvement in efforts to gain passage of a safety belt usage law. The first activity necessitates an understanding of public attitudes on compulsory safety belt usage and how public support for occupant restraint legislation can be increased. The second activity involves implementing procedures designed to facilitate public input into the legislative process.

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD SAFETY BELT USAGE LEGISLATION

Traffic safety laws and programs are nearly always resisted by some members of the general public. For example, motorists regularly violate the 55 mph speed limit on state highways, and initially public opposition to such

traffic safety programs as licensing drivers and mandatory blood tests for drinking drivers was very strong. Thus some public opposition to occupant restraint legislation can be expected.

Nevertheless, recent surveys show that public response to safety belt usage laws is highly variable. Several opinion polls measuring public attitudes toward mandatory safety belt usage laws reveal that a sizeable number of people support the idea and that the opposition is not overwhelming. One recent national survey reported that a majority of American drivers (54 percent) favored the enactment of a safety belt usage law,⁽²⁾ however a second national survey reported that a majority of the American public (57 percent) thought laws requiring the use of seat belts were a "poor" idea.⁽³⁾ At the state level, public responses to such laws have ranged from 55 percent in favor (Oregon) to 54 percent against (New Hampshire).⁽⁴⁾ A survey by the American Automobile Association (AAA) of its membership showed 41 percent favored safety belt usage laws, 48 percent opposed them, and 11 percent undecided.⁽⁵⁾

Yet even in those states where a majority of state residents are opposed to occupant restraint legislation, public opposition is more of a threat than a reality. In most states, public opinion regarding compulsory safety belt usage laws tends to be unformulated and unfocused. When first asked about occupant restraint laws, the public's response in most cases is hesitant and unsure. Most members of the general public do not fully understand or appreciate the seriousness of traffic accidents, or the need for safety belt usage laws. Indeed most are unaware of previous attempts to enact a safety belt usage law in their state, and many are totally ignorant of the concept. Most of the opposition people express relative to safety belt usage laws is based on preconceived ideas rather than facts.

Much of the opposition to safety belt usage laws that does exist comes from people who do not wear safety belts--ironically the same people who create the need for such laws. This opposition is usually based on their personal dislike and fear of safety belts. In addition, many people feel that occupant restraint laws are a governmental violation of individual rights and another example of "excessive government." What is essentially a traffic safety issue becomes a civil liberties and/or "big government" issue; a transformation often accompanied by considerable public resentment.

Experience indicates that public resistance to health and safety measures dissipates rapidly once the public begins to perceive their purpose. For example, the requirement that construction workers wear "hard hats" was uniformly opposed by workers, unions, and industry. Their reason: the requirement constituted excessive governmental interference into their private lives. Now the hard hat has become a symbol of the construction trade. Past experiences in Australia and Canada indicate that after passage public acceptance of safety belt usage laws also increases rapidly. In both countries, public opposition to the law was initially relatively high, but after its passage the opposition diminished to insignificant levels. (6)

In addition, a great deal of public opposition can be avoided by a carefully drafted safety belt usage bill (see Appendix B). For example, occupational groups that would be severely inconvenienced by a safety belt usage law (e.g., deliverymen) should be exempt while on duty. In addition, public acceptance can be increased if the title of the proposed bill avoids words like compulsory or mandatory. Additional suggestions regarding the wording of a safety belt usage law are provided in Appendix B.

OVERCOMING PUBLIC RESISTANCE TO OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LEGISLATION

Attempts to modify the public's generally neutral but frequently negative attitudes toward safety belt use are hampered by several factors. In relation

to other public concerns (e.g., taxes and crime) traffic safety rank relatively low (primarily due to public ignorance regarding the problem). In addition, most people feel driving is comparably safe; thus they perceive little need to wear safety belts. Furthermore, many people believe that accidents are controllable and result from bad driving. Accordingly, other people have accidents, not themselves. Finally, safety belt usage legislation is opposed, because many people believe safety belts themselves are dangerous and/or ineffective.

Nevertheless, public resistance to occupant restraint legislation can be overcome. Recent research indicates that public support can be increased by providing people with information on:

- The effectiveness of safety belts for reducing accident-related deaths and injuries:
- The effectiveness of safety belt usage laws for increasing general belt use;
- Potential savings in terms of lives, injuries, taxes, and insurance costs; and
- Enhanced automobile control in the event of an accident.

This information is more effective if presented as a package (as in Appendix A) rather than separately. As a general rule, arguments on behalf of occupant restraint legislation need to illustrate the problem, the solution, and the benefits in order for people to fully understand the issue. However, mass media public information and education (P.I.&E.) campaigns designed to encourage voluntary safety belt usage have been known to increase public support for safety belt usage laws (see Chapter IV). Therefore, such campaigns can be extremely valuable in overcoming public resistance to occupant restraint legislation.

Guidelines for Generating more Favorable Attitudes Toward Safety Belt Usage Laws

The major problem in generating public support for safety belt usage laws is not convincing people to support such legislation but getting the information.

needed to win their support to them. Due to the size of the general public target audience (significantly outnumbering all members of the other target groups combined), this is the most difficult group for proponents to communicate with. The problem is complicated by both cost and functional problems in using certain communications channels to reach them (see Chapter IV).

Previous experiences in foreign countries and the U.S. have shown the following activities to be effective ways of disseminating information to the public:

- Distributing informational pamphlets and materials on safety belts and safety belt usage laws to the public;
- Mass media public information and education (P.I.&E.) campaigns;
- Increasing news coverage relative to proposed occupant restraint legislation;
- Presentations to civic groups and professional organizations on occupant restraint legislation;
- Utilizing volunteer groups, citizen and professional service organizations to promote safety belt usage legislation among the general public (especially doctors and policemen);
- Responses to public inquiries and criticism regarding proposed safety belt usage legislation.

Written materials can be disseminated to the general public in numerous ways. In Ontario, Canada, for example, booklets designed to educate the public about the need to wear safety belts were distributed at driver licensing stations, automobile dealers, garages, and other public places. Another way is to utilize volunteers to distribute materials at public gatherings. Information materials also can be mailed directly to people. It should be noted that Appendix A has been written so that sections or all of it can be reproduced as a special booklet on safety belt usage laws. Proponents can either distribute Appendix A to the public or produce their own materials for public distribution. In addition, proponents can obtain materials for public distribution from many other sources (see Appendix C for details). Additional suggestions on the distribution of information to the general public are presented later in this chapter and in Chapter IV.

Mass media P.I.&E. campaigns and news media relations are special features of a safety belt usage law campaign. Techniques and procedures for performing these activities are discussed in Chapter IV. Suggestions regarding the conduct of presentations to organized groups and their involvement in a safety belt usage law campaign are also presented in the next section of this chapter. As for responding to public comments regarding proposed safety legislation usage legislation, this is mostly a matter of answering letters and telephone calls. A special person should be delegated this responsibility.

The conduct of information dissemination activities is constrained by several factors. Many involve substantial costs; others are constrained by legal restrictions (e.g., Federal regulations prohibit the use of radio and television channels to conduct P.I.&E. campaigns on legislative issues; see Chapter IV). In addition, the people and time needed to conduct some activities may not be available. Generally, the more activities that proponents can conduct the better, but each safety belt usage law campaign must determine which activities are most appropriate to their state, which activities they have the resources to perform, and which activities they can accomplish.

In some cases it may be unnecessary for proponents to conduct all the information dissemination activities cited above. If surveys show that a majority of state residents favor safety belt usage legislation, there is little need for a mass media P.I.&E. campaign. In addition, it may be possible to neutralize public opposition to occupant restraint legislation by involving civic groups and professional organizations in efforts to pass the legislation.

HOW TO SOLICIT FEEDBACK FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Public support for safety belt usage legislation can greatly increase its chances for passage, but legislators usually receive very little input from the general public on legislative issues. Accordingly, a safety belt usage law campaign should encourage the public to show their support and develop feedback mechanisms for them to do so. Two types of mechanisms

are involved: (1) those that involve having members of the general public contact state legislators directly, and (2) those that involve measuring public attitudes on occupant restraint legislation.

Feedback mechanisms that involve personal contacts between state legislators and members of the general public include letters, telephone calls, telegrams, and personal visits. Few people bother to contact legislators regarding any legislative issue, and those who do are mostly opposed to the issue. Whenever proponents meet with members of the general public they should stress to them the importance of showing public support for occupant restraint legislation and urge them to contact their legislator. People who can provide first-hand knowledge about the benefits of wearing safety belts (e.g., accident victims, rescue workers, and policemen) should be especially encouraged. To aid the public in establishing contact with legislators, proponents should make available to the public a list of the addresses and telephone numbers of all state representatives and senators.

Public opinion polls, petitions, and letter collections are feedback mechanisms that proponents can use to illustrate the magnitude of public support for occupant restraint legislation. A survey is useful not only for measuring public acceptance but also for identifying public concerns relative to safety belt usage laws. This information is extremely valuable in planning media campaigns and other activities designed to increase support. In addition, survey results can be useful in helping proponents avoid unnecessary conflicts and opposition.

Petitions are often used to show public support for an issue. A petition on the issue of occupant restraint legislation should be circulated among members of the general public; often outside groups can be enlisted to circulate it. In addition, letters from the general public in support of a safety belt usage law should be assembled in one collection. This collection may be augmented by letters clipped from the editorial pages of state newspapers.

The public input gathered by safety belt usage law proponents through surveys, petitions, and letters must be made available to state legislators. Proponents can pass this information along through their personal contacts with the legislators, at committee hearings, and during floor debates. If polls indicate that a majority of the public's supports occupant restraint legislation, this information also should be disseminated to the press.

DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL AND CIVIC SUPPORT
FOR A SAFETY BELT USAGE LAW

Professional and civic support for safety belt usage legislation will usually originate from groups and individuals having a professional or civic interest in traffic safety and/or public health issues (e.g., traffic safety officials). Many will be directly affected by the public's refusal to voluntarily wear safety belts (e.g., insurance agents), and some may be affiliated with national organizations working to gain passage of a safety belt usage law (e.g., doctors). For these reasons, proponents will find professional and civic support easy to generate.

The support of professional and civic organizations can be instrumental in gaining passage of occupant restraint legislation. Their endorsement can help persuade others to support safety belt usage legislation (e.g., state legislators and the general public). In addition, many professional and civic groups are willing to actively participate in a safety belt usage law campaign by disseminating information; by working to generate legislative and public support; and by volunteering their time and resources.

Individuals too can provide valuable support for a safety belt usage law campaign, particularly those knowledgeable in the area of highway safety. For example, the support of well-known public figures can be helpful in generating public acceptance of occupant restraint legislation. Often individual members of professional/civic groups are willing to participate, if their organization are unable or unwilling to do so.

Obtaining professional and civic support for safety belt usage legislation is basically a matter of requesting it. In most states, there is no organized opposition to occupant restraint legislation, so the influence of opponents is not a factor. A few groups and individuals may refuse, but most will cooperate. The main problem for proponents is identifying organizations and individuals having the requisite professional and civic interest in highway safety.

IDENTIFYING OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LEGISLATION

A safety belt usage law campaign should represent a broad range of different organizations, professions and interests, but campaign efforts to involve outside groups and individuals should be purposefully limited. Proponents should concentrate on the legislature, the police, and the general public; community support should be sought only to the extent that it can assist the campaign in these other activities. This is not to say that professional/civic groups and individuals should not be encouraged to fully participate, only that one or two representatives of various occupational and civic groups are sufficient.

In the past, members of the professions and organizations listed below have been supporters of occupant restraint legislation:

- Physicians and medical groups
- State traffic safety officials
- Local traffic safety organizations
- Insurance agents
- Rescue/Ambulance drivers
- Driver educators
- Parent groups
- Civic organizations

The above list will help proponents identify various sources of outside support for a safety belt usage law, however the list is far from exhaustive. A few inquiries among the above groups will generally generate not only support but the names of other supporters.

The involvement of physicians and medical personnel in a safety belt usage law campaign establishes occupant restraint legislation as a public health as well as a traffic safety issue. Moreover, the medical profession is very

influential with state legislators; their participation will reinforce proponent arguments about the need to wear safety belts and the seriousness of the state's accident problem. In addition, physicians are strong believers in safety belts and frequent supporters of safety belt usage laws (especially pediatricians).

Traffic safety officials are also well-respected by state legislators and strong supporters of occupant restraint laws. The state Traffic Safety Coordinator and Governor's Highway Safety Representative should certainly be involved in any safety belt usage law campaign. Furthermore, these officials can often put proponents in touch with other supporters, possible sources of campaign funding, and sources of information and data regarding the state's accident problem.

State chapters of national traffic safety and automobile associations are a third possible source of support for a safety belt usage law campaign (e.g., state chapters of the National Safety Council and the American Automobile Association). State affiliates of the National Association of Women Highway Safety Leaders have been actively involved in efforts to promote passage of a safety belt usage law in several states. Proponents should also investigate the possibility of involving automobile dealer associations in the campaign.

Because of their close involvement with accident victims, many insurance organizations endorse the idea of compulsory safety belt usage. In a few states, insurance representatives have been key participants in efforts to enact a safety belt usage law (e.g., Ohio and Minnesota). In most cases, these insurance organizations will represent insurance agents rather than companies. A few telephone calls to insurance brokers should enable proponents to readily identify these organizations.

Rescue organizations must frequently respond to traffic accidents: experiences which often make them supporters of occupant restraint legislation. Similarly,

the interest of driver educators in promoting good driving practice often leads them to support safety belt usage legislation. Finally the support of parent groups, such as the Parent Teachers Association, and civic organizations, such as the Jaycees, can sometimes be enlisted for a safety belt usage law. Proponents will generally find it well worth their time to contact a few representatives of these groups about their possible participation.

State Groups Versus National Organizations

Occupant restraint legislation is essentially a state issue; consequently, state groups are more effective in generating legislative and public support for the issue than national organizations. Legislators tend to be skeptical of information put forth by national groups attempting to promote passage of safety belt usage legislation (e.g., the American Seat Belt Council and the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association). In some state's national organizations are viewed as "outsiders"; therefore, their efforts on behalf of proposed safety belt usage legislation tend to be counter-productive.

However, national organizations can still provide valuable support for state efforts to gain passage of a safety belt usage law. Many of these groups have state affiliates that are willing to participate in a safety belt usage law campaign. Furthermore, the national organizations are valuable sources of data and information on occupant restraint legislation, and they are often willing to make available to state-level campaigns communications materials and literature. In addition, national organizations can offer advice and technical assistance on how to organize and manage a safety belt usage law campaign.

INVOLVING OUTSIDE SUPPORT IN A SAFETY BELT USAGE LAW CAMPAIGN

Professional/civic groups and individuals can assist a safety belt usage law campaign in a variety of ways. As with police officials, the minimum requirement is an endorsement of the proposed legislation. In addition, individual

members of the group or profession can testify at legislative hearings, contact state legislators on behalf of the proposed legislation, and hold press conferences to announce their endorsement. These actions can be extremely beneficial in increasing legislative support for a safety belt usage law.

Professional/civic groups and individuals can also assist proponents in disseminating information relative to safety belt usage laws to the general public target audience. For example, organizations can invite proponents of occupant restraint laws to address their group. These speaking engagements can be used to generate news coverage, to circulate a petition calling for the enactment of a safety belt usage law, and to request the assistance of the group in promoting passage of the law. Some groups are willing to sponsor rallies and other events designed to increase public support for occupant restraint legislation. In addition, professional/civic groups and individuals may be willing to disseminate literature to the public on safety belt usage laws. Finally, professional/civic groups are sources of funds and volunteers for a safety belt usage law campaign.

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CHAPTER IV
MEDIA INVOLVEMENT IN A SAFETY BELT USAGE
LAW CAMPAIGN

The media (i.e., radio, television, and newspapers) have generally exerted a negative influence on past efforts to enact safety belt usage laws in the United States. Safety belt usage legislation typically receives very little media attention--news coverage tends to be sparse and incomplete. In short, the topic is not viewed as newsworthy; such treatment--or lack thereof-- actually hurts a proposed law's chances for passage.

On the other hand, proponents of safety belt usage legislation have failed to make effective use of the media as a resource. The media provide numerous opportunities to increase public knowledge on the issue and to change negative attitudes towards the law, but few groups have availed themselves of these opportunities. In the past, most proponents have virtually ignored the possible positive influence the media could have on the issue.

A safety belt usage law campaign must view the media as both a target audience and a resource. This chapter discusses these prospective roles and how proponents can best deal with each. The chapter covers methods of increasing and improving news coverage on proposed occupant restraint laws and techniques for making more effective use of the media as a campaign resource. In conclusion, the chapter suggests other types of public information and education activities that proponents may conduct on behalf of a proposed safety belt usage law.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

With respect to a safety belt usage law campaign, the media serve as communications channels between proponents of occupant restraint legis-

lation and the respective target groups (especially the general public). Both news reporting and public service advertising provide supporters with communications outlets for increasing public knowledge and insight on the issue.

The News Media

Through newscasts and press coverage, the media disseminate information about a variety of subjects to the public. Since a proposed safety belt usage law is a legitimate news event, some information about the legislation will be reported. The task faced by proponents of the legislation is to ensure that news reports are accurate, impartial, and thorough, a task that is not all that easy to accomplish.

In the past, most news reports on proposed mandatory safety belt usage legislation have been brief and descriptive rather than analytical. Typically, news stories reported who was sponsoring the bill, its chances of success, and what the legislation entailed. Very few of these reports were longer than two paragraphs, and many were subsumed in larger articles on either traffic safety or general legislative events. For the most part, they failed to report why the law had been proposed, what it would do for the state, or how it would work.

Such reports do little to enhance a proposed law's chances for passage. In fact, incomplete and superficial news accounts of occupant restraint legislation may even increase public concern about unnecessary laws and government interference, and may thereby increase opposition. More importantly, inaccurate or incomplete reports mean that communications between proponents and the various target groups will suffer because the media do not fully understand the issue.

It should not be assumed that media personnel have information that is any more accurate, thorough, or thoughtful than that known by the general public. Most have only a surface knowledge of their state's traffic

safety problems, and they are generally unfamiliar with projected reductions in fatalities and injuries (that would result from higher belt usage rates), with the experiences of foreign countries that have instituted belt use laws, and with the potential tax savings that would accrue to the state from compulsory safety belt use. In addition, highway safety is usually a low priority item in relation to other social problems.

To ensure more accurate and complete news coverage of proposed legislation, proponents must be prepared to educate media representatives as well as the public. To ensure that the public receives all the facts required in order to make an enlightened decision about occupant restraint laws, proponents must first establish procedures and mechanisms for transmitting the requisite data to the media. This includes procedures for monitoring media reports and responding to inaccurate and/or misleading information.

The Role of Public Service Advertising

Public service advertising is a second communications channel available to safety belt usage law proponents. Unlike the news, it is a resource that proponents can use to communicate specific messages to the respective target groups--a resource with the potential of reaching mass audiences and changing their attitudes towards safety belt usage legislation. However, there are two restrictions on its use: (1) it is an outlet confined mainly to the electronic media (i.e., radio and television), and (2) public service advertising cannot be used to directly promote legislative causes (e.g., a safety belt usage law).

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires all radio and television stations to make available a certain amount of free "air time" for public purposes, but newspapers are under no such obligation. Consequently, very few newspapers contribute space for public service advertising. In

addition, under the FCC's "Fairness Doctrine," radio and television stations are required to provide equal time for the expression of opposing viewpoints on any political advertising. Since this would include announcements on behalf of occupant restraint laws, most stations refuse to carry such advertising. Their refusal also extends to paid commercials, since the FCC rule covers paid as well as unpaid advertisements.

Nevertheless, public service advertising can be used to increase public awareness of traffic safety countermeasures, to explain the benefits of wearing safety belts, and to encourage motorists to voluntarily wear lap and shoulder belts. Furthermore, research indicates that public information and education (P.I.&E.) campaigns to increase voluntary safety belt usage also have a positive effect on public acceptance of safety belt usage laws. For example, public approval of mandatory safety belt usage increased significantly in both Ontario and Michigan following extensive media campaigns on safety belt use. In addition, public service advertising can supplement other P.I.&E. activities that directly promote passage of occupant restraint legislation (e.g., paid newspaper advertisements).

However, a public service advertising campaign is a difficult endeavor. Proponents must obtain or produce recorded announcements on safety belts, distribute them to local television and radio stations, and get the stations to broadcast the announcements. Ideally, the advertising campaign should be timed to coincide with legislative efforts on behalf of a safety belt usage law. These activities necessitate a highly organized and concerted effort. For some campaigns, initiating a public service advertising campaign may be impossible, but if the campaign has the resources or if an agency within the state government can be located to conduct it, a public service advertising campaign can be invaluable to proponent efforts.

TECHNIQUES AND METHODS FOR IMPROVING NEWS COVERAGE RELATIVE TO OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LEGISLATION

The news media are chroniclers of events rather than participants in them, but they are also in the business of selling their news programs. News means action, and local action is best. The media also show a strong preference for dramatic stories with a local flavor: issues and events that affect the lives, health, comfort, and happiness of the people who reside in the communities they serve.

The challenge faced by proponents of a safety belt usage law is to frame events and happenings associated with their campaign in dramatic and local terms. A second challenge is to get this information to the media and to inform them of the basic facts and issues surrounding the problem. Neither of these tasks is easy, but they can be accomplished. By understanding a few basic techniques and methods, as well as the needs of the media, news coverage of proposed occupant restraint legislation can be considerably increased and improved.

There are several ways to get information to the media; some of these are discussed below.

Press Conferences

A press conference can be an effective method of disseminating information to both the media and the public. A conference to announce a coordinated campaign by various governmental units in cooperation with citizens groups to enact a safety belt usage law is guaranteed news coverage. Coverage of other campaign related events such as speeches and rallies is also probable if sufficient notice is given to the media and if these notifications are accompanied by fact sheets and background information. If the event is one in which action (such as a march in front of the statehouse) can be incorporated, a great deal more coverage can be obtained.

A news conference generally begins with a short statement giving the reason for the conference and the basic story. Facts or statistics that bear on the issue should be available in a handout. Biographies of people involved in the campaign, the text of the opening remarks, and other related information also should be available. Following the opening statement, there is a question and answer period. It is important to be organized and prepared--likely questions should be anticipated. Questions should be answered honestly, and when an issue is uncertain, the speaker should not hesitate to say that the item will require further study.

Interviews

Interviews can be utilized in a number of ways, but they are especially effective when coordinated with a press conference. Immediately following the conference, have legislators, police officials, and other important individuals involved with the campaign available for interviews. This not only increases the potential for news coverage, but may lead to special feature-length news programs on the campaign.

Personal Appearances

Another possibility that presents itself as a result of post-conference interviews is an invitation for government officials and others involved in the campaign to appear on local radio and television "talk" or interview shows. Even if the invitations are not forthcoming as result of the press conference, these shows are constantly seeking interesting and informative people to appear and every effort should be made to publicize the availability of campaign participants.

News Releases

News releases should be prepared for the media on a regular basis. Releases should be written as clearly and concisely as possible. Unexplained jargon has no place in a news release, and a brief, well written

release will receive a much better reading in a newsroom than a complex twelve-page epistle.

Spot and Feature News Stories

News exists within any organization, but the media do not always have the time or the resources to cover it; hence, many organizations voluntarily report news stories about their work to the media. A safety belt usage law campaign can also prepare news stories about its work and volunteer them to the media.

Generally speaking, there are two types of news events: spot news stories and feature stories. Spot news reports on events or happenings as they occur. This would include events such as the initiation of a safety belt usage law campaign and the introduction of a safety belt usage law in the state legislature. A news release is a type of spot news story.

Feature stories provide a more in-depth look at a particular event or issue. Generally, they have a strong human interest or educational theme and have no time deadline. Feature stories can be used any time, and frequently they are prepared days or weeks before they appear. Feature stories can be prepared on such topics as the people involved in the campaign and the reasons why the law is needed.

At the end of this chapter are some further suggestions on writing spot and feature news stories.

Editorials

Many people (especially state politicians) read the editorial sections of the newspaper with great interest. Likewise, many people pay close attention to editorials presented by the broadcast media. Editorials

endorsing a safety belt usage law can greatly aid campaign efforts; a concerted effort should be made to gain editorial endorsements for occupant restraint legislation.

Editorial writers should be provided with detailed background information and fact sheets so they can write informed, educated material. The possibility also exists that guest editorials can be arranged, using the talents (ghosted or otherwise) of various officials and personalities in the campaign. These editorials signed by government officials, legislators, law enforcement officers, and doctors can also be adapted for use as television and radio editorials, ideally with the author presenting them in person.

Letters to the Editor

Proponents of a safety belt usage law should not overlook letters to the editor as a means of disseminating information to the public and to counter editorials against occupant restraint legislation. In addition, proponents can use the electronic media to respond to radio and television editorials on safety belt usage laws.

Key People to Contact within the Various Media Organizations

It is important to know the people who report the news. This includes people in the press and on radio and television. If you do not know them, pay them a visit--after you have learned when they are least busy. Look into the news capabilities of public television and radio as well as cable systems in your area. Develop a list of the key people and keep them informed.

Meet the city and managing editors of the local newspaper(s), and remember that the Sunday editor (if there is a Sunday paper), the picture editor, and the suburban editor are also important. At radio and television stations, speak with the station manager, program directors, and their staffs.

This is also an excellent time to discuss public service advertising opportunities and editorial endorsements.

While it is nice to know the editors of the local papers and the managers of radio and television stations, the individuals most important to the campaign's efforts are the working reporters and camera crews who cover the news. Help them and you can usually count on good coverage-- and there is a huge difference between coverage and good coverage

A few guidelines for working with media personnel follow:

- Be available. Make sure reporters who cover the campaign know who to contact and have the telephone number(s). Give them alternate names and numbers, as well.
- Know the deadlines of newspapers and those of the radio or television news show.
- Plan. Don't call your contact five minutes before deadline with a story you could have relayed three days earlier.
- Don't play favorites. There are two important points to remember here. First, if a reporter gets information from you that you had not already planned to release, that's an "exclusive" and you should never volunteer the same information to other reporters. If others call you about the same subject, it's all right to provide the information. Second, when you are originating a story, make sure that each medium receives your news release or your phone call as nearly simultaneously as you can manage. One medium should not be favored over another.
- Don't complain about a story unless a serious error has been made, and then first call the reporter who handled the story. Don't go to the boss unless it's absolutely necessary.
- Don't heckle reporters by constantly asking them why a story you submitted wasn't used. It's all right to ask your contact if there was something wrong that could be corrected next time, but there are many good reasons why your story might have been thrown out at the last minute to make room for something the editor considered more newsworthy.

- Don't forget to say thank you. It pays big dividends to let members of the media know you appreciate their efforts. When someone does a particularly good job of reporting about your project, on one occasion or over the space of several months, a short, simple thank you note will always be appreciated and remembered. And if you're thanking a reporter, send a copy of your letter to his editor or news director.

THE MEDIA AS A CAMPAIGN RESOURCE

The media can be utilized as a resource for promoting passage of a safety belt usage law in two ways: (1) to conduct an advertising campaign on behalf of voluntary safety belt use and (2) to announce and promote campaign events and rallies. Mass media campaigns usually fail to increase voluntary safety belt usage, but they often succeed in improving public attitudes regarding mandatory safety belt usage. In addition, they help mitigate any opposition to a proposed law that is based primarily on a dislike for safety belts. For these reasons, campaigns should use the resources of the mass media to promote voluntary belt use whenever possible.

In addition, the media can be utilized to advertise special events associated with a campaign to enact a safety belt usage law (e.g., a public hearing to be held by state legislators on the issue). Because such announcements do not constitute an endorsement or advertisement of occupant restraint legislation, most stations will carry them.

Public Service Announcements

As earlier indicated, radio and television stations are required to set aside air time for messages and programs that serve the public interest. Most of this time is devoted to public service announcements (the remainder goes for public service programs). A public service announcement (PSA) is a 10,* 20,* 30, or 60-second spot similar

*Although there is a distinct trend away from PSAs less than 30 seconds long.

to a commercial, except that the message relates to a public purpose rather than a commercial product. Utilization of the media's resources on behalf of occupant restraint legislation is predicated upon public service announcements.

For the most part, a media campaign on voluntary safety belt use requires professionally produced audio and video PSAs. Fortunately, quality commercials for both radio and television are readily available from many different sources. The best way to obtain them is to contact the state's Governor's Highway Representative or Traffic Safety Coordinator. Alternatively, proponents can contact the organizations listed in Table IV-I for radio and television announcements on safety belt use.

For announcements related to campaign events, it will be necessary for proponents to prepare their own PSAs. Radio announcements can be typed, and the station will have an announcer read them. Television generally requires a pre-recorded announcement on film or videotape. Some stations are willing to furnish studios and technical assistance to organizations unable to produce their own PSAs.

Procedures for Getting Public Service Announcements on the Air

Stations vary greatly in their requirements for submitting public service announcements. Before submitting announcements, it is wise to first contact each station directly to ascertain its current preference with regard to spot length, format, number of copies, amount of lead time, etc. Many stations require a fact sheet on the organization submitting spots for consideration. This sheet should contain the following information: name of organization, address, telephone, purpose, date founded, number of members, membership policy, financing, director of professional staff (if any), certification of nonprofit status, and any other brief information that can help a station determine the appropriateness of providing air time for the organization. In addition,

Table IV-1

SOURCES FOR PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS ON SAFETY BELT USE

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
400 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

National Safety Council
444 N. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

American Seat Belt Council
1730 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Highway Users Federation
1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036

Motorists Information, Inc.
519 New Center Building
Detroit, Michigan 48202

American Automobile Association
8111 Gatehouse Road
Falls Church, Virginia 22042

The Advertising Council, Inc.
825 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10022

most stations require that pre-recorded announcements (e.g., commercials on safety belts) be accompanied by a script and/or storyboard.

PSAs on safety belt use should be disseminated to local radio and television stations shortly before the state legislature convenes, so that the legislative efforts and the media campaign coincide. As the legislative debate builds, proponents should increase their media efforts. Having submitted a PSA to a local station, however, is no guarantee that it will be played. Proponents must stay in close contact with the station managers and program directors and periodically remind them of the importance of safety belt use.

Although public service advertising is extremely advantageous to proponent efforts, it has a number of drawbacks. Competition from other organizations is fierce, making it difficult to obtain adequate air time for safety belt advertisements. Working with local radio and television stations may require a full-time person handling only media and public relations. Many campaign organizations lack the resources to pay such a person.

Second, there is little control over when PSAs will be run. Commercial clients buy certain time slots, but while some stations will run short public service announcements in prime time along with the commercials, most stations schedule PSAs during periods when the commercial load is low.

ADDITIONAL PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

In addition to news and public service advertising activities, a safety belt usage law campaign may also elect to conduct other types of public information and education activities. These P.I.&E. activities give proponents numerous opportunities to directly contact the respective

target groups and to present evidence on behalf of safety belt usage laws as well as the benefits of belt wearing. Some other P.I.&E. activities that each safety belt usage law campaign should consider are discussed below.

Speaking Engagements

Speaking engagements can provide a vital link between proponents and various segments of the community. Moreover, a systematic series of speeches can generate substantial support for occupant restraint legislation and considerably bolster the legislation's chances for enactment. Enthusiastic and informed proponents who are willing to speak before public gatherings should be identified, and their availability to service clubs, professional organizations, churches, and civic groups publicized.

Brochures

Every campaign organization should compile some written materials on occupant restraint legislation that can be readily distributed to the respective target groups; brochures are an ideal way of transmitting this information. Proponents may either produce their own brochures and pamphlets or use Appendix A of this handbook. Appendix A develops the case for occupant restraint laws and discusses most of the reservations people have about them. It can be reproduced as a brochure and distributed as part of the campaign.

A major advantage of brochures is the ease with which they can be distributed. They can be passed out at the offices of cooperating state agencies (e.g., the DMV), doctors' offices, automobile dealers, and at special events. In addition, they can be used to solicit feedback from the general public and others by including questionnaires and/or surveys for readers to return.

Newspaper Display Advertising

An expensive but noticeable way to communicate campaign messages on behalf of a safety belt usage law is through newspaper display advertisements. Some newspapers may donate space for these ads, and in some instances, private organizations may be willing to cover the cost. They are most effective when eliciting a specific action (e.g., "Support Efforts to Require Safety Belt Usage"). They are probably least effective when trying to change public attitudes.

If it can be arranged, a "newspaper blitz" may be used to build support for a safety belt usage law. Newspapers that support occupant restraint legislation may be willing to carry day-by-day accounts of accident fatalities and injuries, including information on whether the victims were using safety belts. If possible, these activities should coincide with legislative efforts on behalf of a safety belt usage law and editorials supporting the law.

Bumper Stickers

The bumper sticker is a modern day phenomenon; it is inexpensive to produce and receives a lot of exposure. Like newspaper advertisements, a bumper sticker should have an action-oriented theme. Bumper stickers can be give-aways distributed by licensing agencies, doctors, insurance agents, and others.

Posters and Billboards

Billboards and posters can also be used to promote a safety belt usage law. Billboards and posters work best when they incorporate a major campaign theme or slogan. They can be created in varying sizes, depending on the message and intended audience, and are most effective in areas with a high traffic volume.

Promotions and Rallies

Promotions and rallies can also be effective in promoting a safety belt usage law. These events can be held in any large public area (e.g., shopping center, football field, or park). They can be combined with other such events as speeches; brochures and bumper stickers can be given away. A petition for participants to sign supporting occupant restraint legislation should also be available (and the media should be notified of the event).

WRITING A SPOT NEWS STORY

Let's take a look at how to write a spot news story.

Try to write a complete story the way a reporter would write it. The lead, that is the first sentence or two, must contain the "WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY." The lead is designed to give readers information quickly and in such a manner that they will want to read the rest of the story.

After the lead, the details are written in declining order of importance. This permits the story to be cut from the bottom, if need be, without having to rewrite it to avoid leaving out important facts.

Be brief. Ordinarily use short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs. Avoid adjectives. Don't try to be cute or literary or arty.

Use exact dates ("May 18," not just "Thursday"). To assure date accuracy use Thursday, May 18. This is easily edited to conform to style. Don't forget to use addresses when necessary.

Never editorialize. Don't write "A wonderful day was had by all." Not only is it hackneyed and trite but it is, after all, just your opinion. Instead, write something like this: "Mrs. Mary Jones, 87, who lives in Parkland, said this was the first trip she had been able to take in over four years. 'It's something I'll remember the rest of my days,' she said."

If this sounds too involved, take your time. Practice a little before you submit copy to a newspaper. In the meantime, keep your news going out by means of fact sheets and press releases. These will let news media know what's going on, and they can call you for additional details if they are interested. But even with a fact sheet, you should do your best to include facts and details that will interest editors and their readers.

WRITING A FEATURE STORY

Feature stories frequently are written days, even weeks, before they appear because they are not timely. They may be definitely tied to a time element, but they are about something you know is going to happen or that you can control.

People and events connected with your project can easily provide much material for feature stories. Keep a record of the more newsworthy people in your project and a record of special events such as anniversaries. When you think you have good material for a feature story, talk to the editor of your local paper or to a reporter. Be sure to get to them two or three weeks in advance of any special date and ask if they are interested and whether they want you to provide a prepared story or information from which they can write the story themselves.

If the editor assigns someone to do the story, write a memo giving the reporter all the data; if you are not going to be interviewed, be sure the reporter (and photographer) are introduced to the interviewee, and give efficient but unobtrusive assistance.

You may want to help the person to be interviewed by telling him in advance the kind of questions likely to be asked. If he can be somewhat prepared he'll feel more comfortable and the interview will go more smoothly. Your notes on the individual should contain a paragraph of general information about your projects. If it's used, fine; if not, nothing is lost.

If the editor says he'll use a story you prepare, keep in mind that a feature must be news too, and that news is something that interests people other than yourself and your close associates. Build your story around facts of general interest. A little study of feature stories in your local papers quickly will show you what is being used. And just give the facts in plain language; if they are really interesting enough to be news, they'll be dramatic without flowery writing.

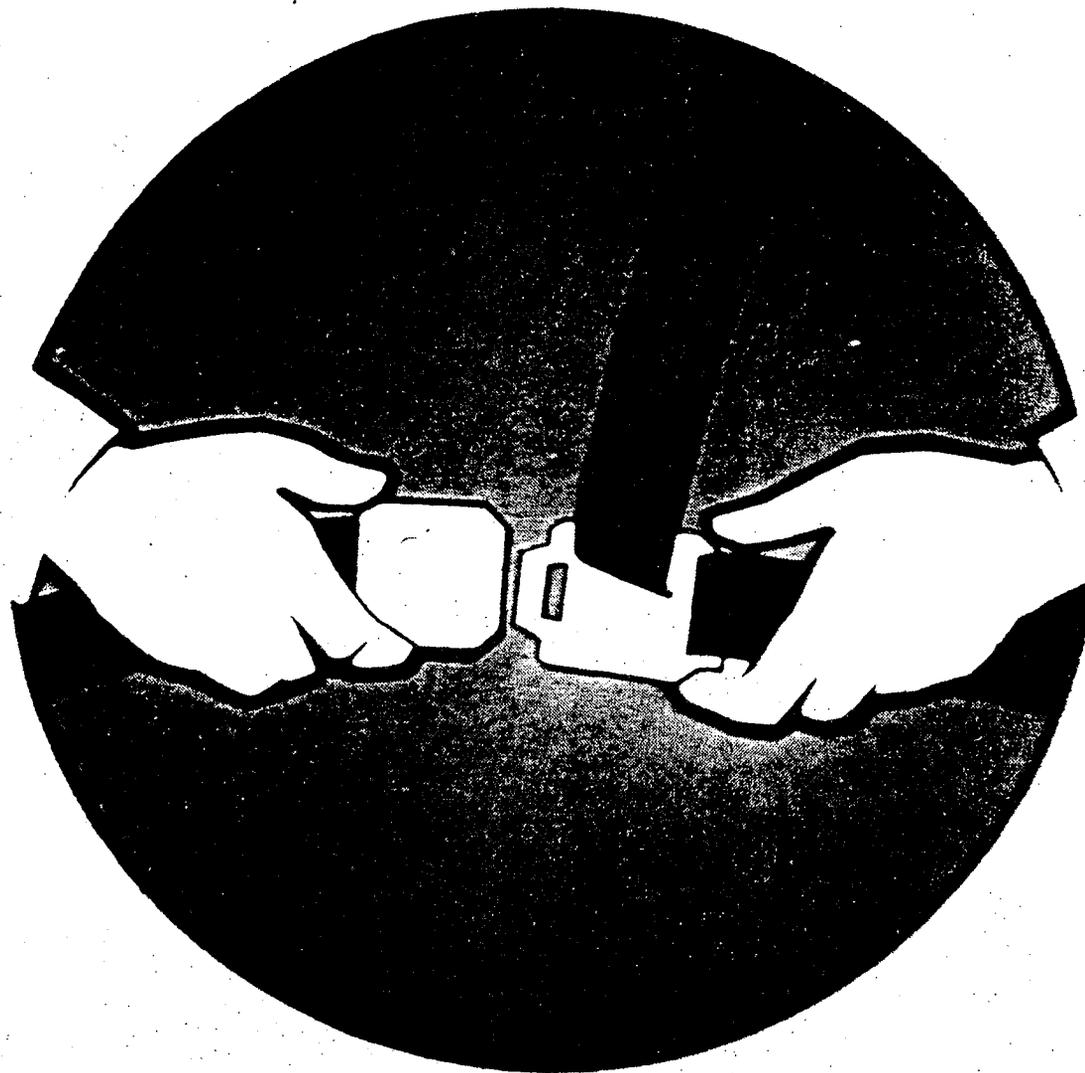
APPENDIX A

OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LAWS: THE PROPONENT VIEWPOINT

Preface

Appendix A presents, a logical, comprehensive, and persuasive case for occupant restraint legislation. It is written so that all or sections of it can be reproduced for public distribution, but it is probably a more effective document when presented in its entirety. In any event, Appendix A contains the information and data that proponents will need to effectively argue the case for occupant restraint legislation with legislators, police officials, the public, and other individuals, and is designed to be used in conjunction with the information presented in other parts of this handbook.

OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LAWS: THE PROPONENT VIEWPOINT



AN EXAMINATION OF THE ISSUES SURROUNDING MANDATORY SAFETY BELT USAGE

THE CASE FOR WEARING SAFETY BELTS

Several arguments can be made in support of regularly wearing safety belts; the discussion could be framed in medical, social, economic or even moral terms. Basically, however, there is one simple reason--safety belts provide protection that the vehicle occupant cannot give himself.* Before examining specific details about using safety belts, let's look at what happens in a motor vehicle accident.

THE HUMAN COLLISION

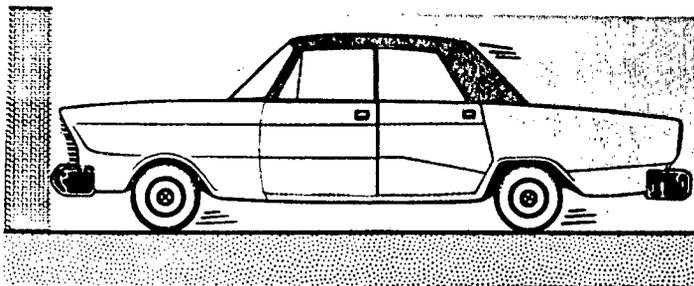
Every motor vehicle accident involves two collisions. The first involves the vehicle: it crashes into something. The second involves the occupants: They crash into the vehicle's interior. In the first collision, property may be damaged, sometimes severely, but generally it can be replaced. But in the second collision, humans may be injured or killed; limbs, organs, or people cannot be replaced.

People who have been in accidents usually understand how easy it is to be hurt seriously, even at low speeds. But, just as non-skiers can't see how a leg can be broken in nice, soft snow, the lucky ones who have never been in an accident often don't fully understand the dangers of the human collision.

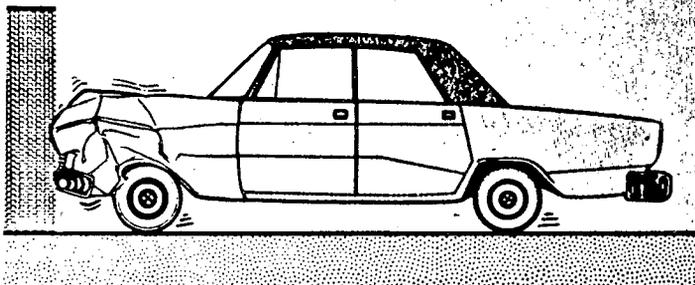
If you've ever bumped your head on the car frame while getting in, you know it hurts and frequently leaves a tender lump. When you bumped your head, you were probably moving at less than one mile an hour. Imagine running at full speed into a steel post: at most, you'd be going about 15 miles an hour, yet your injuries would be severe, if not fatal. Unlike the lobster, we are not protected by a tough shell: impacts with unyielding objects do great damage to our relatively fragile bones and organs. In an automobile accident, travelling at "only" 30 miles an hour, the impact is four times as great as in our example of running into a steel post.

*Throughout this document the singular masculine pronoun will be used for ease of reading. However, we intend all such references to include women as well.

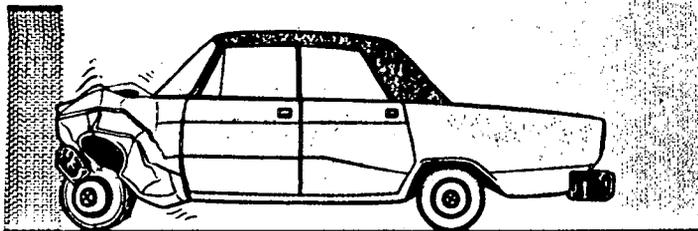
Figure 1: The First Collision



When a car hits a solid barrier, it doesn't stop all at once. The bumper stops immediately but the rest of the car continues to move forward.



The car slows down as the crushing of the front end absorbs some of the force of the collision.



At 30 mph, it takes about 1/10 of a second for the car to come to a complete stop. The front end will be crushed but the passenger compartment will usually remain undamaged by the collision.

Figure 2: The Human Collision



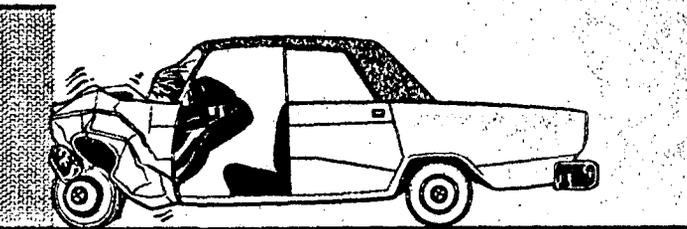
0.000 seconds - car hits barrier

On impact, the car begins to crush and to slow down. The person inside the car has nothing to slow him down so he continues to move forward inside the car at 30 mph.



0.100 seconds - car stops

Within 1/10 of a second, the car has come to a complete stop. The person is still moving forward at 30 mph.



0.120 seconds - person hits car interior

One-fiftieth of a second after the car has stopped, the person slams into the dashboard and windshield. This is the human collision. In the car's collision it takes 1/10 of a second to stop; in the human collision it takes only 1/100 of a second.

Slow motion films of a crash show that even though the vehicle stops, the occupants continue to move forward inside the car. Unless restrained, they slam into the interior at the car's original rate of speed. Injury is virtually guaranteed; death is all-too-often unavoidable. Figures 1 and 2 show what we would see in a slow motion film of an accident at 30 m.p.h.

PREVENTING THE HUMAN COLLISION

There is one sure-fire way to prevent the human collision: never set foot in a vehicle that is intended to move. Obviously, in our society that is totally absurd, even though some people do refuse to use certain modes of transportation, including elevators. Fortunately, we have various mechanical and safety devices that help reduce the impact of accidents, yet we often fail to see their value.

In part, we resist because we believe that we can brace ourselves by grabbing the steering wheel or dashboard with tensed arm muscles, or by firmly planting straightened legs against the floorboards. Several things are wrong with this idea. First, when an accident is about to happen, people tend to panic; they don't think clearly and they react instinctively to their fright (how often have you seen an intensely frightened person throw his arms up in the air?). Second, there is rarely time to take any precautions at all. Third, and most important, is that even the most level-headed and well prepared person would be unable to withstand the impact sufficiently to maintain muscle control.

At 30 m.p.h., the equivalent force of several thousand pounds is exerted against the body. Imagine trying to "catch" a fully packed steamer trunk dropped from only a few feet; that's mild compared to the force with which your body is hurled against the car's interior.

To counteract the intense force exerted in a crash, the body must be restrained. The force of the impact is reduced to humanly tolerable levels if the person is held into the seat with a seat belt. Forces are distributed more evenly, since more parts of the body absorb and thus diffuse

Figure 3: Preventing The Human Collision



On impact, the car begins to crush and to slow down.



As the car slows down, the person moves forward until the seat belts restrain him. The belts keep him in his seat and keep his head and chest from striking the car interior.



As part of the car, belted passengers are able to "ride down" the collision — to take advantage of the car's slower stop, as it crushes and absorbs energy. For belted passengers, there is no human collision.

the shock; the seat belt also allows the body to come to a more gradual stop. Figure 3 shows how this works. Turn back to Figure 2 to contrast the effects of the same accident on an unbelted driver.

Our illustrations show someone wearing a shoulder harness, but even a simple lap belt helps. It keeps the head from striking the windshield or frame because it prevents the body from moving forward fully; the head may strike the steering wheel or dashboard but will not suffer the intense damage of striking and going through a thick pane of glass or hitting the frame. Furthermore, since the lap belt distributes impact more evenly over the entire body, the force with which the head and chest strike the interior is reduced. But the lap belt alone is not nearly so effective as a combination lap belt and shoulder harness. Together, these keep a person in the seat and distribute the force of the collision over the hips and shoulders--the parts of the body that can best withstand the force.

So far our discussion about prevention has been theoretical. Let's look at some laboratory and real experiences that demonstrate the difference a belt can make in a collision.

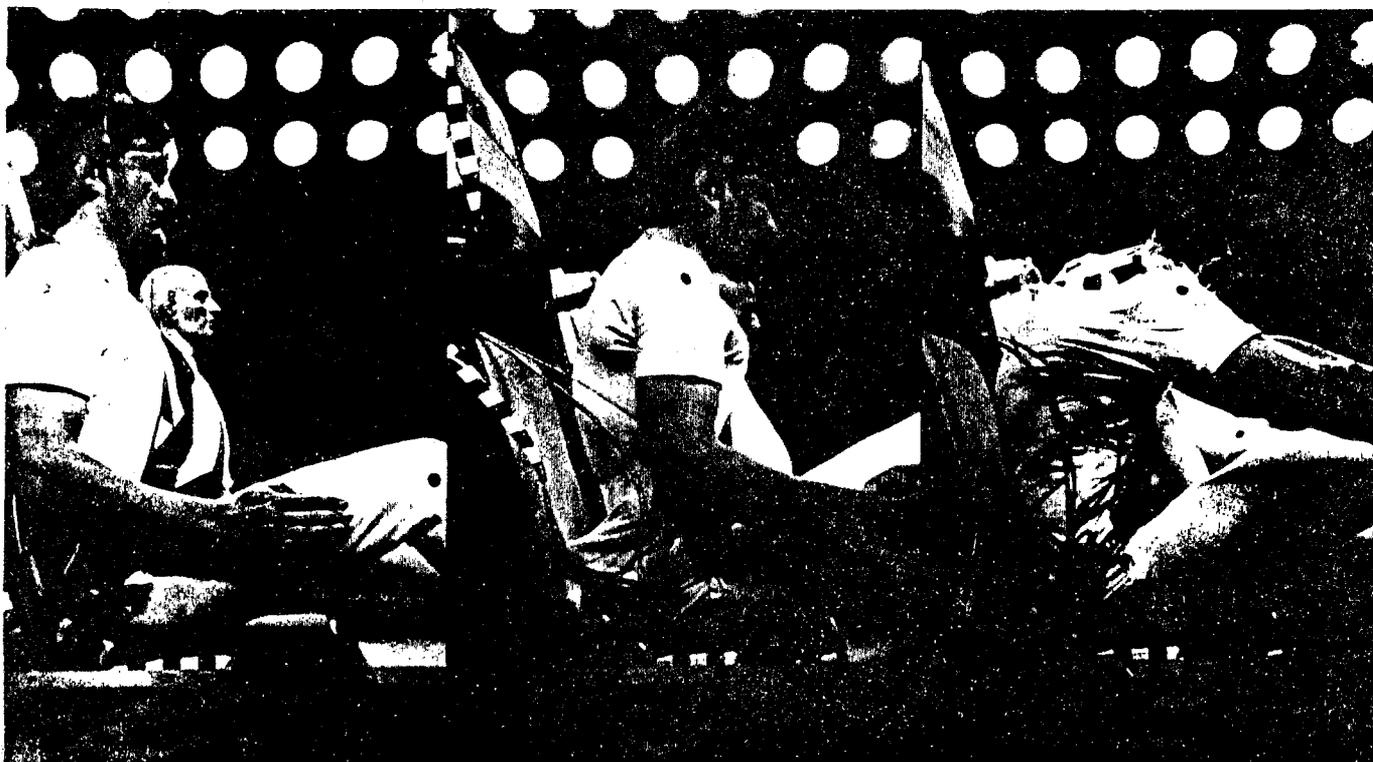
Laboratory Evidence

Laboratory experiments simulating crashes generally use mannequins carefully constructed to approximate the human body, but human volunteers have participated. The "occupants" ride in a crash simulator sled, a structure similar to a car frame. The sled runs along a track and can be accelerated and stopped abruptly, simulating the force of a collision. Figure 4 shows how both human and mannequin occupant were restrained from pitching forward in the sled as it stopped quickly; they were both wearing safety belts.

Evidence from Real Collisions

Laboratory simulations may not convince people that seat belts make any difference at all in more complex real-life situations. Laboratory

Figure 4: The Crash Sled Test



1

Research engineer Michael Walsh awaits his ride on a crash simulator sled.

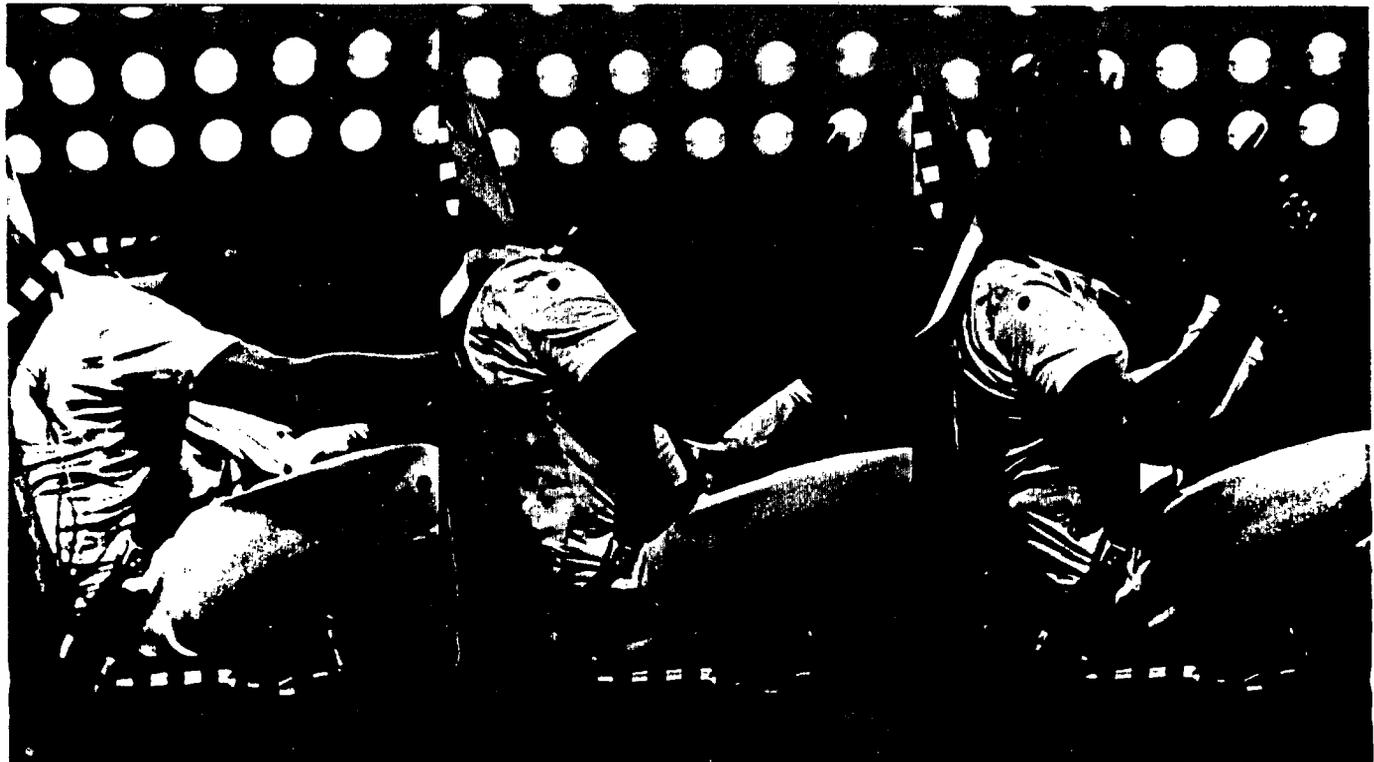
2

Impact! Walsh is thrown forward. The seat belt keeps him in his seat.

3

Here the forces of the collision are at their maximum. Notice the bulging of Walsh's stomach as the seat belt strains to hold him back.

Figure 4: The Crash Sled Test (Continued)



4

The human collision has been avoided and Walsh's body begins to rebound.

5

Less than 1/10 of a second after impact, Walsh safely returns to his original position.

6

The speed of this simulated barrier collision was 17 mph!

simulations, even those in which two cars actually run into each other, don't take into account such things as weather conditions, type of cars, attempts made by the driver to avoid the crash, and a host of other things that are part of real accidents.

During the mid-1960's authorities in Sweden examined the details of 28,000 real accidents. In not one case where the car was traveling up to sixty miles an hour was anyone killed who was wearing a seatbelt. This implies that the reduction of deaths could be quite significant for seat-belt wearers in the U.S., where the maximum speed limit is now 55. And the issue was not that deaths occurred only at speeds above 60: unbelted people were killed in collisions at less than 20 miles an hour. Other findings from the Swedish investigation showed that belted people received only half as many injuries as those not wearing belts, regardless of collision speed.⁽¹⁾

A U.S. study for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of 15,818 towaway accidents found that of those injured or killed in the accidents, occupants not using seat belts were 3 1/3 times more likely to be killed, 3 times as likely to be seriously injured, and 2 times as likely to be moderately injured than those who were wearing safety belts.⁽²⁾

Several other studies have also shown that safety belts substantially reduce injuries and deaths (e.g., Blomgren and Scheuman, 1961; Campbell, 1969; Levine and Campbell, 1971; Ontario Department of Transportation, 1969; Robertson and Haddon, 1972; and Williams, 1972). Recently, the National Highway Safety Needs Report estimated that over a ten-year period, 89,000 fatalities and 3.2 million injuries could be prevented with 80 percent lap and shoulder belt use; they ranked safety belts as the most cost-effective of 37 highway safety measures.⁽³⁾ If you have an accident, the evidence shows indisputably that it will be less serious if you are wearing a seat belt.

During the next ten years, it is estimated that more than 20 million people will be killed or injured in traffic accidents. That is like dropping

bombs on Washington, D.C.; Dayton, Ohio; Portland Oregon; Atlanta, Georgia; and Jackson, Mississippi, killing or injuring every resident. National figures also show that over your driving lifetime (~40,000 trips), you have a one-in-three chance of being killed or injured in an automobile accident. (4) If there was a one-in-three chance of our furnace exploding during our lifetime, we'd surely do something. And yet we allow ourselves the same chance of being killed or hurt in an automobile accident, where reducing the hazard takes far less effort. Why?

RESISTANCE TO SEAT BELTS

In spite of the overwhelmingly convincing arguments showing that seat belts offer protection that is otherwise unattainable, their use is often resisted, sometimes passionately. One study has shown that about one-third of the people who use cars never use seat belts, while only about one-fifth use them regularly; the rest fall somewhere in between. Although there are some scientific studies that enumerate reasons for not using belts (we'll get to these in a minute), one theme that runs through a variety of "risky" situations is the simple human belief that "it can't happen to me." Except it does, and it has been estimated that over the next fifty years 33 percent of us will be killed or injured in an automobile accident. If that's not you, it very likely will be somebody you know or care about.

Apart from this tendency to believe in our own immortality, people have given more specific explanations. Let's examine some and at the same time look at why, on the basis of facts, they are not really sound reasons.

Belts are Uncomfortable or Inconvenient

Twenty-eight percent of people surveyed in one study gave this as their primary reason for not using belts. Since this statement is purely subjective, no rational argument can counter it. It's true that early seat belts were no prize-winners for design or ease of use. However, the art and science have improved considerably in recent years, and more

comfortable and convenient safety belts are now being installed in cars. We might add that it is a lot more uncomfortable and inconvenient to be in pain. Or blind. Or dead.

Belts Aren't Needed for Short Trips

In the same survey, twenty-seven percent of the people felt that their kind of driving either didn't require or would be hampered by using seat belts. Many people believe that belts are only necessary for long trips on super highways, or, at the very least, driving on city expressways. However, facts suggest otherwise: the accident rate is low on expressways; short trips on city and country roads are potentially more dangerous, even with the lower speed, since traffic is more dense and there are more obstacles. And local trips are much more common than long distance drives.

Coupled with the first item of misinformation is the erroneous belief that high speeds and poor weather conditions are the major contributors to fatal accidents. Not so! The majority of fatal accidents occur at moderate speeds and during the late summer and early fall, when weather conditions are generally favorable. Also remember that the Swedish survey found that unbelted occupants were killed at speeds of less than 20 m.p.h.

Haven't Formed the Habit of Using Belts

This reason was given by twenty-five percent of the people questioned. New habits are probably as hard to make as old ones are to break. But that's really no excuse. In the not-too-distance past when we thought we had an unlimited supply of cheap fuel there were a lot of conservation habits we didn't have. As our consciousness and utility prices have been raised, chances are we've all become a little more sparing in our use of electricity, natural gas, and petroleum products. All it takes is practice.

Belts Are Unnecessary

Or so thought fourteen percent of those surveyed. Compared to food, clothing, shelter, love, and security, belts are relatively unnecessary. On the other hand, not wearing them could make fulfilling other needs impossible or irrelevant.

Belts Trap You in a Wrecked Car

Six percent of the people surveyed expressed this fear of entrapment. The fear usually is described in terms of being trapped in a flaming car, or one that has jumped a bridge and is rapidly sinking into the water. Others feel that being "thrown clear" of the car increases the chance of not being killed.

We saw earlier that wearing a belt significantly reduces the chances of head injury, which in turn reduces the chances of being knocked unconscious. This, in turn, reduces the chances of being trapped in a burning or sinking vehicle because there is a greater chance of being conscious and able to unbuckle the belt and escape. Furthermore, figures show that fire or submersion accidents are rare, and rarer still when compared with the human collision and the possibility of unconsciousness that occur in virtually every crash.

As for being thrown clear: this happens in any spill from a two-wheeled vehicle that has no walls to protect the rider from being thrown directly to the ground. The world outside the car is very dangerous for a fast moving, unprotected human body, as results of most motorcycle accidents attest. Some investigators have found that about 25 percent of all deaths were caused when occupants were thrown from the vehicle. In fact, one study estimated that about 80 percent of these deaths could have been prevented had the person remained in the car.

The reasons noted above are among the most frequently given for not using seat belts. They suggest that acquiring the habit of using seat-belts is not going to be easy. In the next section, we will examine some of the reasons that underlie the need for laws to enforce seat belt use.

THE CASE FOR OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LAWS

Seat belts are standard equipment in almost all American and imported cars. But as we noted earlier, two-thirds of the driving population do not regularly use them, in spite of their generally favorable attitudes about the idea of safety belts.

Efforts to encourage voluntary use have been many and varied: reminder buzzers linked to the belt, ignitions that won't work if the belt is unbuckled, inspection checks for the presence and adequacy of at least lap belts, media campaigns, insurance-reduction incentives, and assorted educational efforts. These efforts have been intense, often ingenious, and frequently expensive; they have also been largely ineffective. For example, the University of California conducted a radio and TV campaign on the need to buckle-up. The results were discouraging:

On the basis of 22,000 [unobtrusive] vehicle observations (28,000 occupants), it is concluded that the public service announcements have had little significant effect on safety belt usage or related attitudes.

The National Safety Council reported similar results in 1968 after spending \$51.5 million in public service advertising.⁽⁵⁾

Past experience has shown that it is unrealistic to expect most Americans to voluntarily wear safety belts. Efforts to encourage people to buckle-up have failed to produce a groundswell of support for safety belts. Consequently, traffic safety experts and officials have finally concluded that passage of a law requiring that belts be worn is the only way to increase their use.

Failure to understand the multiple social and economic ramifications of not buckling up may tempt one to say, "Well, we tried to get people to do it voluntarily and we failed; let's give up the whole discussion because its their lives after all." That's the problem--its not just their lives.

In only one of literally hundreds of similar incidents, the National Transportation Safety Board recounted a tragedy in which a truck was involved in an accident. The unbelted driver was thrown clear; the truck continued to travel down the road, out of control, and collided with several other vehicles. The result: people were killed who were doing nothing more illegal, hazardous, or foolish than driving. Freak? Maybe. But accidents, by definition, are unplanned and uncontrollable; we have come to take their occurrence for granted and call only the worst of them freaks.

Almost everyone has experienced the immediate human tragedy caused by accidents; at the level of personal suffering, the case for reducing accidents is compelling and indisputable. But those who believe that wearing safety belts is a personal choice may be surprised by a few facts.

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF ACCIDENTS

Consider what happens when there is an accident in which someone is injured. The police must come at a cost of about \$90 per accident*; an ambulance must come for the injured; possibly a tow truck must remove the vehicle from the road; a fire engine could be needed, but that is rare. These services and vehicles are paid for by your tax money. It's true that police and emergency services must exist, but the budget for these services depends partly on how often the services are used; reducing accidents might mean that local or state government could reduce the size of the forces and thus lower taxes. Table 1 shows how much four types of accidents typically cost a state.

Let's go on: our victim is now out of the hands of rescue people and in the hospital. Some of his hospital costs may be paid through various Federal

*National estimates put the annual national costs for police investigations of fatal accidents at \$2.9 million; investigations of injuries and property damage: \$66 million.

TABLE 1

AVERAGE STATE COSTS PER HIGHWAY FATALITY AND INJURY

| <u>COST COMPONENT</u> | <u>FATALITY</u> | <u>PERMANENT & TOTAL DISABILITY</u> | <u>PARTIAL DISABILITY</u> | <u>NO PERMANENT DISABILITY</u> |
|----------------------------|-----------------|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | (A) | (B) | (C) | (D) |
| Lost State Taxes | \$11,000 | \$4500 | \$900 | 140 |
| Police Agencies | 160 | 70 | 70 | 20 |
| Legal and Court Costs | 400 | 290 | 200 | 50 |
| Probation Offices | 115 | 115 | 115 | 115 |
| Coroners/Medical Examiners | 180 | - | - | - |
| Motor Vehicle Departments | 15 | 15 | 15 | 5 |
| Hospital/Medical Costs | 35 | 900 | 350 | 60 |
| (Borne by State) | 435 | 435 | 435 | 435 |
| Public Welfare Overhead | - | 485 | 240 | - |
| Rehabilitation | - | - | - | - |
| TOTAL | \$12,340 | \$6,810 | \$2,325 | \$825 |

- (A) Based on loss of 10 years income
 (B) Based on loss of 4 years income
 (C) Based on loss of 10 months income
 (D) Based on loss of 45 days income

Sources: 1975 Societal Costs of Motor Vehicle Accidents, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (DOT-HT-802-119), 1976.

Wuerdemann, H.G., Joksch, H.C., National Indirect Costs of Motor Vehicle Accidents (Vol. 1) Federal Highway Administration (DOT-FH-11-7773), 1973.

Joseph C. March, et al., Financial Consequences of Serious Injury, Highway Safety Research Institute, University of Michigan (UM-HSRI-77-27), 1977.

health insurance programs (an average \$6800 in public funds is spent for every permanent disability case). More than likely, though, the costs are borne through a private insurance company. These costs become part of the basis for calculating next year's premium. There is a good chance that the company will find it is costing more and more to insure people; premiums go up. Every individual who holds health, life and/or automobile insurance is affected, if only infinitesimally, every time there is an accident for which the insurance company must pay.

If he is hospitalized long enough, some form of salary compensation may go into effect for our victim. When that happens, the state and Federal governments' returns from the person's income tax decrease. Furthermore, since some medical expenses are tax deductible, the victim will pay less tax than if he had not had the accident: combining only state taxes lost for both fatalities and permanent disabilities, the average is about \$8,000 per incident. We are not saying that this system is unfair, or that people who suffer more than others should be expected to pay taxes as if they hadn't suffered; that wouldn't be equitable, either. The point is that each loss of Federal and state revenue contributes to the loss of the quality or quantity of services provided through tax money: the swimming pools, parks, schools, and street repairs that we take for granted. In many states, the estimated \$12,000 cost of each traffic fatality would pay a teacher's salary for a full year; the \$6,800 state cost for every permanent disability could certainly fill a lot of pot holes.* It has been estimated that the national expenses for traffic accidents exceed \$45 billion annually. In 1973, the fifty states combined spent \$48.8 billion to finance all pre-college education. It costs almost as much to hurt ourselves as it does to educate our children.

*These costs do not include welfare payments (1/3 of which come from state funds) or the financing of vocational rehabilitation services provided to accident victims (the states pay 25% of that cost).

One other type of information needs to be folded into the above equation. Safety belt usage laws not only save lives; they save money. In 1976, the Canadian Province of Ontario enacted legislation requiring the use of safety belts. The findings of a study conducted after the law had been in effect are as follows:

- the cost of treating accident victims declined by 30.4%;
- the number of hospitalized accident victims dropped by 22.2%;
- cost of hospitalization per victim was reduced by 10.5%;
- in-patient admissions were 39.4% lower than before the law; and
- the province saved \$1.0 million in hospital costs during the first three months the law was in effect.⁽⁶⁾

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has estimated that if only 80 percent of the American public who use cars would regularly wear seat belts, 8900 lives would be saved and some 300,000 injuries would be avoided each year. These estimates would reduce deaths by an average of 171 per state and total injuries by 6000 (saving each state in excess of \$50 million). The savings in human pain and suffering would affect many more people than those involved in the accidents. The savings in terms of state revenue lost or expended alone would affect every resident of the state.⁽⁷⁾

FOREIGN EXPERIENCES WITH OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LAWS

The argument for compulsory safety belt usage has been bolstered by the success of such legislation in many countries, notably Australia and Canada. During the first nine months of Australia's law (January to September 1971), the number of drivers who had belts available and were wearing them increased from 25 percent to an average of 64 percent in rural areas and 75 percent in urban areas. By late 1972, the rural wearing rate was up to 76 percent, and by May 1973, the urban wearing rate was up to 80 percent. As a result

of making wearing safety belts mandatory, there was a eighteen percent reduction in fatalities and an twelve percent reduction in injuries during the first nine months of 1971. These results are being sustained seven years later.

In 1976 the Canadian Provinces of Ontario and Qeubec also enacted safety belt usage laws. Following passage of the laws, occupant fatalities declined by 17 percent in Ontario and 18 percent in Quebec. The experiences of 10 selected countries with safety belt usage laws are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2
SAFETY BELT USAGE LAWS AROUND THE WORLD

| <u>Country</u> | <u>Effective Date of Law</u> | <u>Belt Usage* Before Law Effective</u> | <u>Belt Usage After Law Effective</u> | <u>Occupant* Fatality Reduction</u> | <u>Occupant* Injury Reduction</u> |
|------------------------|------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Australia (all States) | 1/1/69 | 25% | 68-85% | 25% | 20% |
| Belgium | 6/1/75 | - | 92% | 39% | 24% |
| Ontario | 1/1/76 | 17% | 77% | 17% | 15% |
| Quebec | 8/15/76 | 19% | 64% | 18% | |
| Finland | 7/1/75 | 40% | 71% | - | - |
| France | 7/1/73 | 26% | 85% | 22% | 32% |
| Israel | 7/1/75 | 8% | 80% | - | - |
| Netherlands | 6/1/75 | Rural: 28% Urban: 15% | Rural: 72% Urban: 53% | - | - |
| New Zealand | 6/1/72 | 30% | 62-83% | 10% | 18% |
| Norway | 9/1/75 | Rural: 37% Urban: 15% | Rural: 61% Urban: 32% | - | - |
| Sweden | 1/1/75 | 36% | 79% | 46% | Serious injuries 46% Moderate injuries 36% |

*Blanks indicate no information available.

Source: Journal of Safety Research, National Safety Council, Volume 9, No. 2 (June, 1977).

PHILOSOPHIC, LEGAL, AND SOCIAL ISSUES RELATED TO OCCUPANT RESTRAINT LAWS

The magnitude of both human and financial savings requires no further comment, but no matter how convincing statistical, economic, or humanitarian arguments may be, there are those who believe that safety belt usage laws are either unconstitutional or an improper intrusion into the private lives of citizens. Other people object to them on the grounds that they are unenforceable, or they see passive restraints (i.e., air bags) as a better alternative. In this section we will look at these and related issues.

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES SURROUNDING SAFETY BELT USAGE LAWS

Several opinion polls have attempted to measure public attitudes toward safety belt usage laws. Responses have ranged from 55 percent in favor (Oregon) to 54 percent against (New Hampshire). A recent national survey by the U.S. Department of Transportation showed that 54 percent of American motorists favored such laws, 45 percent were opposed, and 1 percent were undecided. (8)

Still, many people do not fully understand or appreciate the seriousness of traffic accidents or the concomittant need for safety belt usage laws. Ironically, much of the resistance comes from people who do not wear safety belts--the same people who create the need for such laws. Most of this opposition is based on a personal dislike and fear of safety belts; but many people also feel that occupant restraint laws are a governmental violation of individual rights.

Occupant restraint laws do raise questions about preserving individual choice versus preserving individual lives and the safety of the community:

- Does the safety belt nonwearer infringe on the rights of others or is the decision not to wear a safety belt solely a personal one?

- Are occupant restraint laws an improper infringement upon individual rights or do they reflect a sensitivity and concern for human life?
- Do safety belt usage laws perpetuate a big-government trend or do anti-government feelings ignore a critical problem?
- What are the alternatives to occupant restraint legislation; how different are they philosophically; and how feasible are they?

These are tough questions for which there are no absolute right or wrong answers. The answers must be weighed by balancing the facts as we know them and against the continuum of similar legislative restraints on individual behavior. Persuasive arguments can be made either pro or con, and any given argument may have important implications for regulations we take for granted (traffic lights, for instance) or how much further the logic could be extended (i.e., requiring all children under age three to sit in molded, cushioned "baby carriers").

Few legislative decisions are clearly good or bad, but proponents of compulsory safety belt usage argue that:

- An individual's decision not to wear safety belts affects us all through higher insurance premiums, automobile prices, medical costs, and taxes.
- Occupant restraint laws are not "an improper intrusion" upon individual liberties if one also considers that an individual also has a right to life and health. Is there a choice between preserving the right of a child to wear or not wear a safety belt and preserving his right to a healthy life?
- Traffic safety has always been regulated by government; passage of occupant restraint laws will not mean bigger government, but it will mean less expensive government. Can any state afford to ignore the potential savings in tax dollars that would result from mandatory safety belt usage?

Each individual citizen, legislator, policeman, doctor, and government official must decide the issue for himself, but it would be a mistake not to consider the proponent case for occupant restraint laws

carefully. The issue has merit and substance. Furthermore, few traffic safety countermeasures have the same potential payoff in terms of lives saved, injuries reduced, and savings to the public.

THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF SAFETY BELT USAGE LAWS

Regardless of one's position on the propriety of a safety belt usage law, no constitutional barrier prevents states from requiring drivers and passengers of motor vehicles to wear safety belts. Safety belt usage laws are often thought to violate the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The 14th Amendment states that no person may be deprived of "life, liberty, or property without due process of law"; but consistent with the requirements of due process of law, states are not barred from the exercise of legitimate police powers to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the general public.

This position has been firmly established by extensive litigation concerning state motorcycle helmet use laws. Such laws have been enacted in 46 states and upheld under the due process clause by the highest state court in 25 states and the U.S. Supreme Court. In these decisions, the courts have ruled that helmet use laws reasonably promote the safety and welfare of the general public as well as the personal safety of the helmet user. These cases furnish strong proof for the proposition that vehicle operators or passengers can be required to use self-protective equipment (e.g., safety belts).

Some people believe that requiring a person to wear a safety belt violates the individual's right to personal privacy. Yet the same argument could be made about requiring that person to buy automobile insurance (at one time it was) or to install a smoke detector in his house; however, few of us feel legally deprived by having to do so. The fact is that driving a vehicle is not a private act; it is a public act that must be done with due regard for the safety of others (remember the out-of-control truck mentioned earlier).

The same argument was put forward about requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets. In upholding the state's law, the Federal District Court for Massachusetts said:

(W)hile we agree with plaintiff that the act's only realistic purpose is the prevention of head injuries incurred in motorcycle mishaps, we cannot agree that the consequences of such injuries are limited to the individual who sustains the injury.... (T)he public has an interest in minimizing the resources directly involved. From the moment of the injury, society picks the person up off the highway; delivers him to a municipal hospital and municipal doctors; provides him with unemployment compensation if, after recovery, he cannot replace his lost job, and, if the injury causes permanent disability, may assume the responsibility for his and his family's subsistence. We do not understand a state of mind that permits plaintiff to think that only he himself is concerned. *Simon v. Sargent*, 346 F. Supp. 277, 279 (D. Mass. 1972), affirmed, 409 U.S. 1020 (1972).

Objections have also been raised on the basis that occupant restraint laws would not apply to vehicles not equipped with restraints, and that some motorists would be exempt for medical or occupational reasons; the claim is that the principle of equal protection would be violated. But this argument is also invalid. Such exclusions are permissible if they have a reasonable basis. The 5th Amendment only prohibits unreasonable and excessive classifications or discrimination in law. Based on legal precedents established by seat belt installation laws, it is quite unlikely that the Supreme Court would find that certain exclusions would violate the equal protection principle. In short, there can be little doubt as to the constitutionality of legislation requiring the use of safety belts.

THE ENFORCEMENT OF SAFETY BELT USAGE LAWS

Enforcement is a major factor accounting for the effectiveness of any traffic ordinance. At first, many people--including a good number of legislators and police officials--conclude that safety belt usage laws

cannot be enforced. If true, then passage of an occupant restraint law would not only be ineffective but would create much public disrespect for the law and police agencies. Fortunately, experience has shown that safety belt usage laws can be enforced.

Both Canada and Australia have achieved a high degree of success in enforcing their respective occupant restraint laws. For example, Ontario police are currently laying one safety belt violation charge for every sixth speeding charge. Both countries rely heavily upon their enforcement programs to create and sustain high levels of belt usage. Their experiences confirm that with proper motivation the enforcement of a safety belt usage law is no more problematic than the enforcement of most other traffic laws.

The enforcement process involves three steps: detection, laying charges, and convicting offenders. Detection is the key to the rest of the process.

Detecting Safety Belt Nonuse

Three modes of operation are usually used to detect violations of a safety belt usage law: patrol, spot checks, and accident investigations. Patrol is the easiest and most common form of detection. Motor vehicles manufactured after 1974 (approximately 50% of the cars on the road in 1978) are equipped with a lap and shoulder belt that can not be separated. In the course of normal patrol activities, police officers can easily see whether occupants of post-1974 automobiles are wearing their safety belts. In addition, the police in Ontario report that they are usually able to observe whether motorists are wearing their safety belts when they stop them for other violations (e.g., speeding).

Spot checks involve directing randomly selected vehicles to the side of the road. Usually this procedure is employed to check for vehicle registration or alcohol involvement and is done in high accident areas. Simultaneously, the police can also check driver's license, insurance coverage, vehicle equipment, and safety belt use.

At an accident scene, most people are out of the car by the time police arrive; however, during the course of accident investigations police are often able to detect whether vehicle occupants were wearing their safety belts. By checking to see whether the safety belts are buckled across the seat, removed, hidden or tied down so as to be unusable, the police can determine if they were worn at the time of the accident. In addition, certain injury patterns reveal whether the belts were used (e.g., ejection, head through windshield, or trapped in position other than occupant seat). Surprisingly, the police have also found that many non-users readily admit to the violation.

The question often arises regarding what happens if a person who is stopped by a patrol officer attempts to put his belt on as the officer approaches, or what happens if a person gets out of his car to meet the officer? What constitutes evidence of non-usage?

First, if the officer has clear visual evidence of the violation, the situation is much the same as if the motorist were speeding but denies it. Second, police are generally able to discern attempts by motorists to fasten their safety belts after being stopped. The awkward motions and squirming that occur as occupants attempt to locate their belts and fasten them before the officer approaches is readily observable. If the driver claims to have removed his belt, the officer can check to see whether the safety belts are tied down, removed, fastened across the car seat, or otherwise unusable. In such cases, drivers can be cited for violating the safety belt usage law. Finally, many occupants often admit to not wearing their safety belts.

The Violation Charge

Assuming that the law goes into effect, and that some motorists are caught violating it, the next step in the enforcement process is technically referred to as "laying charges." Since there is currently no national precedent for such a law, there can be no absolute statement about what kind of charge will

be laid for a violation. The wording of the charge will probably be something like, "Failure to use safety belt while operating a motor vehicle having such equipment." Chances are, at least in the early life of the law, that the offender will be issued a warning, and this warning will become part of his permanent motor vehicle record. A second infraction could be treated as a moving violation, costing the offender points against his license, but more likely the violation will be handled in the same way as a parking ticket: there will be a fine and a penalty for not paying it, but no points will be charged against the license.

The Conviction

Convicting a driver of violating the law will follow the pattern of convictions for speeding or failure to observe other traffic rules. In those countries where such laws exist, the charge is rarely contested, so the conviction is not a complicated process.

In summary, safety belt usage legislation can be enforced. Admittedly, it is sometimes difficult but no more so than the enforcement of many traffic laws (according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, over half of the American drivers regularly violate the 55 m.p.h. speed limit). Furthermore, most automobiles are equipped with lap and shoulder belts that can not be separated; thus, non-use is very visible. Still other methods of detection are available when only the lap belt is used.

What is crucial to enforcement is that police officers recognize the value of belt wearing and vigorously enforce the law. Pre-legislation consultation, well-written legislation, education, and a clear enforcement policy will make the legislation work.

WHAT ABOUT AIRBAGS

Air bags or passive restraint systems have been suggested as an alternative to safety belt usage laws. Passive restraints are safety systems

that automatically act to protect vehicle occupants from death and injury during crashes. Since they are built into the automobiles, no voluntary action, such as fastening a safety belt, is required of car occupants. In 1982, new full-sized passenger cars sold in the U.S. must be equipped with front-seat passive restraint systems; by 1983, all new intermediate and compact cars must be so equipped; by 1984, all new cars will be required to have such passive restraint systems.

Types of Passive Restraints

There are two types of passive restraint systems: Automatic safety belts and airbags. Passive safety belts are designed to move into place as passengers are seated. No belt buckling is required. A shoulder belt connects with the vehicle's front doors; it extends and retracts as the door is opened and closed. There generally is no lap belt; a knee restraint or bolster replaces it.

Airbags, installed in the vehicle's dashboard and steering wheel, are invisible. In a crash, airbags automatically inflate, preventing driver and/or passenger from striking the car's interior. In a matter of seconds, the bags deflate. Airbags work on the principle of deceleration, not impact; thus, accidental bumps will generally not cause them to inflate. However, when a car is involved in a serious frontal crash (e.g., 10 to 12 mph), the abrupt deceleration causes the sensor to activate the nitrogen gas inflator. The bag inflates in approximately 1/25 second to protect car occupants.

In a crash, occupants move face-forward into the bags while the knee restraints keep them from sliding underneath. The air cushions absorb the impact. The porosity of the bags allows the air to escape even as they are being inflated, and deflation occurs very rapidly.

Passive Restraints and the Need for Safety Belt Usage Laws

The passive restraint requirement will not eliminate the need for safety belt usage legislation. Overall, airbags are most effective when used in conjunction with safety belts. In certain types of crashes, airbags offer limited protection (e.g., side impacts, roll-overs, and rear-end collisions). Furthermore, unbelted occupants may still be ejected, and, since airbags deflate rapidly, there is little protection should multiple crashes occur.

Automatic safety belts offer the protection of regular safety belts, but only the smaller cars (i.e., compacts and sub-compacts) are likely to be equipped with them. Other sized cars probably will come equipped with airbags. Moreover, it will take a period of ten years to get to a point where 90 percent of all cars are equipped with passive restraints. In the interim, a safety belt usage law could be preventing an untold number of deaths and injuries.

CONCLUSION

The safety belt usage law issue necessitates a value judgment--literally a life-or-death decision. The public, the legislator, the newspaper, and the government official must become fully informed about the risks and benefits that would accrue from passage of occupant restraint legislation. Together they must decide whether the reduction in human and financial loss that is reflected in seat belt use is a worth-while trade-off for the freedom of not using them.

It is hoped that the information presented here has given citizens and legislators a better understanding of the issues involved, and of why occupant restraint laws need to be enacted.

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3. U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The National Highway Safety Needs Report. Washington, D.C., 1976.
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Photos and graphics courtesy of the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and Communications.

APPENDIX B
EXAMPLES OF SAFETY BELT USAGE LEGISLATION

During legislative and public debates, fundamental issues regarding safety belt usage laws are often obscured by various technical objections. Rather than focusing on the merits of the issue, the debate becomes side-tracked onto extraneous issues. Valuable time and effort may be lost defending a proposed safety belt usage law on such point as its purpose, exemptions, and penalties.

Such objections can usually be avoided, if the proposed bill is carefully drafted, provides for needed exemptions, and sets reasonable penalties. Appendix B presents a list of criteria to follow in drafting safety belt usage legislation as well as a "model bill" prepared by the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances. Three examples of good safety belt usage bills that have been proposed in U.S. state legislatures are also included--well written aspects of each bill are noted. Appendix B also contains an example of the type of proposed safety belt usage law that is typically introduced in state legislatures but raises numerous technical objections.

CRITERIA FOR SAFETY BELT USAGE BILLS

Based on the legislative history of previous safety belt usage bills, the following criteria will help clarify the impact and purpose of the law and will be helpful in promoting its passage.

- Title--The bill should contain a short title. A title such as "General Occupant Restraint Measure" or "Vehicle Occupant Protection Act" may help to reduce public opposition to the proposed law.
- Intent--A statement of the purpose of the law should be included.
- Exemptions--The bill should provide for exemptions to the law if compliance would be impractical or constitute a legitimate hardship (e.g., people with medical problems and delivery men).
- Penalties--The bill should contain reasonable penalties; a fine of \$10 to \$25 is considered reasonable. A stiffer penalty may be set for a second violation.

MODEL SAFETY BELT USAGE BILL

The National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances has prepared a model bill for states interested in enacting a safety belt usage law. A copy of the bill is presented below.

Note that the model bill includes a statement of its purpose: "...to reduce the number and severity of injuries and accidents on the highways by requiring most drivers to use available lap and shoulder belts and by requiring other passengers to use lap and shoulder belts...." Sections 4 and 5 include exemptions to belt usage requirements, and Section 8 describes the penalty for those convicted of a violation of the Act, imposing a maximum fine of \$25. To promote wider public acceptance of the bill, the title, "Proposed Law Requiring Use of Seat and Shoulder Belts" should be changed to refer to the legislation as a "protective" or "safety" measure.

PROPOSED LAW REQUIRING USE OF SEAT AND SHOULDER BELTS

Introduction

This Proposed Law was prepared for the National Safety Council by the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances under special procedures that have been developed for the preparation of model laws. This Proposed Law has not been approved by the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances and it is not part of that organization's Uniform Vehicle Code. Two preliminary drafts of this Proposed Law were prepared by the National Committee's staff and were distributed for comment on July 17, 1972 and August 29, 1972. The second draft was reviewed and revised by a Special Panel appointed by the Chairman of the National Committee which met on September 27, 1972.

If provisions in the Act should be placed in a state's vehicle code after enactment, it would be unnecessary to enact sections 1, 2 and 8 if suitable definitions, application provisions and penalties are applicable to the remaining sections.

Contents of the Proposed Law

Purpose

- S. 1 Definitions
- S. 2 Application
- S. 3 Lap and shoulder belts required
- S. 4 Driver must use lap belt
- S. 5 Driver must use shoulder belt
- S. 6 Passengers must use lap and shoulder belts
- S. 7 Effect of nonuse in civil litigation
- S. 8 Penalties

Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to reduce the number and severity of injuries and accidents on the highways by requiring most drivers to use available lap and shoulder belts and by requiring other passengers to use lap and shoulder belts whenever their use is possible, reasonable and safe. The Act would require lap and shoulder belts in most motor vehicles in use on the highways, indicate the effect of nonuse in civil actions and would provide a penalty.

S. 1 Definitions

The following words and phrases when used in this Act shall for the purpose of this Act have the meanings respectively ascribed to them in this section, except when the context otherwise requires.

(a) Bus.-- Every motor vehicle designed for carrying more than 10 passengers.

(b) Commissioner.-- The commissioner of motor vehicles of this State.*

(c) Department.-- The department of motor vehicles of this State.*

*If the term "commissioner" or "department" is not appropriate, the official or agency responsible for administering motor vehicle equipment regulations should be substituted.

(d) Driver.-- Every person who drives or is in actual physical control of a vehicle.

(e) Gross weight.-- The weight of a vehicle without load plus the weight of any load thereon.

(f) Highway.-- The entire width between the boundary lines of every way publicly maintained when any part thereof is open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel.

(g) Implement of husbandry.-- Every vehicle designed or adapted and used exclusively for agricultural operations and only incidentally operated or moved upon the highways.

(h) Motor Vehicle.-- Every vehicle which is self-propelled and every vehicle which is propelled by electric power obtained from overhead trolley wires, but not operated upon rails.

(i) Multipurpose passenger vehicle.-- Every motor vehicle designed to carry 10 passengers or less which is constructed either on a truck chassis or with special features for occasional off-highway operation.

(j) Owner.-- A person, other than a lienholder, having the property in or title to a vehicle. The term includes a person entitled to the use and possession of a vehicle subject to a security interest in another person, but excludes a lessee under a lease not intended as security.

(k) Passenger car.-- Every motor vehicle designed for carrying 10 passengers or less except motorcycles and multipurpose passenger vehicles.

(l) Special mobile equipment.-- Every vehicle not designed or used primarily for the transportation of persons or property and only incidentally operated or moved over a highway, including but not limited to: ditch digging apparatus, well boring apparatus and road construction and maintenance machinery such as asphalt spreaders, bituminous mixers, bucket loaders, tractors other than truck tractors, ditchers, levelling graders, finishing machines, motor graders, road rollers, scarifiers, earth moving

carry-alls and scrapers, power shovels and drag lines, and self-propelled cranes and earth moving equipment. The term does not include house trailers, dump trucks, truck mounted transit mixers, cranes or shovels, or other vehicles designed for the transportation of persons or property to which machinery has been attached.

(m) Truck-tractor.-- Every motor vehicle designed and used primarily for drawing other vehicles and not so constructed as to carry a load other than as part of the weight of the vehicle and load so drawn.

(n) Vehicle.-- Every device in, upon or by which any person or property is or may be transported or drawn upon a highway excepting devices moved by human power or used exclusively upon stationary rails or tracks.

Comment for S. 1. These definitions are taken from the Uniform Vehicle Code with a few minor modifications for closer conformity with definitions used in Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. The definition in S. 1(i) of "Multipurpose passenger vehicle" is taken from those Standards.

S. 2 Application

The provisions of this Act shall apply to motor vehicles operated upon the highways of this State.

Comment for S. 2. This section applies safety belt equipment and use requirements only to motor vehicles that are operated on highways.

S. 3 Lap and shoulder belts required

(a) Every passenger car manufactured or assembled after January 1, 1965 shall be equipped with lap belt assemblies for use in the driver's and one other front seating position.

(b) Every passenger car manufactured or assembled after January 1, 1968 shall be equipped with a lap belt assembly for each permanent passenger seating position.

(c) Every passenger car manufactured or assembled after January 1, 1968 shall be equipped with at least two shoulder belt assemblies for use in front seating positions.

(d) Every truck, bus and multipurpose passenger vehicle manufactured or assembled after July 1, 1971 shall be equipped with a lap belt assembly or with a lap and shoulder belt assembly in the driver's seating position.

(e) Every truck tractor manufactured or assembled after January 1, 1965 that is designed to draw a vehicle with a gross weight over 10,000 pounds shall be equipped with a lap belt assembly for use in the driver's seating position by (January 1, 1974).

(f) The commissioner may except specified types of motor vehicles or seating positions within any motor vehicle from the requirements imposed by subsections (a) through (e) when compliance would be impractical.

(g) No person shall install, distribute, have for sale, offer for sale or sell any belt for use in motor vehicles unless it meets current minimum standards and specifications (approved by the commissioner) (of the United States Department of Transportation).

(h) Every owner shall maintain belts and assemblies required by this section in proper condition and in a manner that will enable passengers to use them.

(i) This section shall not apply to implements of husbandry or special mobile equipment.

Comment for S. 3. This section requires belts for most motor vehicles used on the highways.

In subsection (a), no state should substitute a date later than January 1, 1965 because lap belts were installed as standard equipment in the front seats of all domestically-manufactured cars after that date. However, in states having laws that require belts in cars made before January 1, 1965, the earlier date should be retained.

Subsections (b) and (c) require the same belts as those required by Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards when the vehicle was made. However, recent revisions in those Standards require more belts in some trucks and multipurpose passenger vehicles than subsection (d) does. An alternative to subsections (b) through (d) would be one subsection requiring all motor vehicles made after January 1, 1968 to be equipped with the lap and shoulder belts that were required at the time the vehicle was manufactured or assembled by standards adopted by the United States Department of Transportation.

As to subsection (e), because some truck tractors made between January 1, 1965 and July 1, 1971, are not equipped with belts, a suitable period from the time of enactment should be allowed for their installation by inserting a date at the end of subsection (e). A requirement to install lap belts for use by the drivers of school buses made before July 1, 1971, should also be considered.

In subsection (g), the enacting state should select language from one of the two parentheses.

S. 4 Driver must use lap belt

(a) Every driver (of a motor vehicle operated on any highway) shall wear a properly adjusted and fastened lap belt.

(b) Subsection (a) shall not apply to:

(1) A driver in a seating position that is not equipped with a lap belt;

(2) A driver frequently stopping and leaving the vehicle or delivering property from the vehicle so long as the speed of the vehicle between stops does not exceed 15 miles per hour.

(3) A driver possessing a written indication from a physician that he is unable for medical or physical reasons to wear a lap belt; or

(4) A driver possessing a certificate or license endorsement issued by the department, or a similar agency in another state or country, indicating he is unable for medical, physical or other valid reasons to wear a lap belt.

Comment for S. 4. This section requires most drivers to use available lap belts. Appropriate exceptions are made for persons who cannot be reasonably expected to use them. The language in the parentheses in subsection (a) could be omitted if S. 2 is enacted.

S. 5 Driver must use shoulder belt

(a) Every driver (of a motor vehicle operated on any highway) shall wear a properly adjusted and fastened shoulder belt.

(b) Subsection (a) shall not apply:

(1) To a driver in a seating position that is not equipped with a lap belt or a usable lap belt;

(2) To a driver in a seating position that is not equipped with a shoulder belt or with a usable shoulder belt;

(3) To a driver frequently stopping and leaving the vehicle or delivering property from the vehicle so long as the speed of the vehicle between stops does not exceed 15 miles per hour;

(4) To a driver possessing a written indication from a physician that he is unable for medical or physical reasons to wear a lap belt or a shoulder belt;

(5) To a driver possessing a certificate or license endorsement issued by the department, or a similar agency in another state or country, indicating he is unable for medical, physical or other valid reasons to wear a lap belt or a shoulder belt; or

(6) When use of the shoulder belt would interfere with operation of the vehicle.

Comment for S. 5. This section requires most drivers to use available shoulder belts. Because it is unsafe to wear a shoulder belt without also wearing a lap belt, this section should not be adopted unless S. 4 is also enacted. The language in parentheses in subsection (a) could be omitted if S. 2 is adopted.

S. 6 Passengers must use lap and shoulder belts

Every passenger (of a motor vehicle operated on any highway) other than the driver shall wear a properly adjusted and fastened lap belt, or a properly adjusted and fastened lap belt and shoulder belt if his seating position is so equipped, unless such use is not possible, safe or reasonable or unless such passenger belongs to a class of persons exempted for medical, physical or occupational reasons under rules adopted by the department.

Comment for S. 6. Passengers other than drivers in motor vehicles operated on the highways would be required under this section to wear available belts whenever their use is possible, safe and reasonable. If there are no belts, their use would not be possible and would not be required. Persons who are very young would be exempted because their use of safety belts would be unsafe. Passengers whose occupational, medical or physical condition prevents compliance would also be excluded because the use of belts would be unreasonable. In addition, the department of motor vehicles would be authorized to exempt persons for medical, physical and occupational reasons.

S. 7 Effect of nonuse in civil litigation

Failure to use any belt in violation of this Act (shall preclude) (shall not diminish) recovery for damages arising out of the ownership, maintenance or use of a motor vehicle (but only as to damages caused by such failure).

Comment for S. 7. If a person fails to wear a belt in violation of sections 4 through 6 and is injured in a crash, should damages resulting from such nonuse be deducted from his recovery in civil action?

There was a significant difference of opinion on this matter among members of the Panel and commentators. Some persons thought that if injuries result from illegally failing to wear a belt, compensation for them under the fault system should be denied. Other persons were opposed to any such reduction.

The majority view among members of the Panel was that enacting legislatures should decide this matter one way or the other. If a state wishes to allow diminution of damages for illegally failing to wear belts, it should adopt the words "shall preclude" and the language in the concluding parentheses. If a state does not want damages reduced because of failing to wear belts, it should adopt the words "shall not diminish" and omit the words in the concluding parentheses.

S. 8 Penalties

(a) It is a misdemeanor for any persons to violate any of the provisions of this Act.

(b) Every person convicted of a violation of this Act shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$25.

(c) A court may probate or suspend all or any part of the penalty in subsection (b) upon such terms and conditions as the court shall prescribe. Such conditions may include driving with no further violations of the (state vehicle code) during a specified time or performing or refraining from performing such acts as may be ordered by the court.

Comment for S. 8. A maximum fine of \$25 and alternative penalties for judges to impose were thought reasonable.

EXAMPLES OF STATE SAFETY BELT USAGE LEGISLATION

Well-drafted belt use laws have been introduced in several state legislatures (e.g., New York, Massachusetts, and Minnesota). Two are presented herein: Georgia and South Carolina. Note the Georgia bill's title: "The Vehicle Occupant Protection Act." Both bills specify exemptions for medical, physical, or occupational reasons, and each bill also defines the penalty to be imposed per violation as not more than \$25.

Georgia

AN ACT

To protect the occupants of motor vehicles; to provide a short title; to define terms used in the Act; to require vehicles to be equipped with seat belt assemblies; to control the sale of seat belt assemblies; to prohibit the removal of seat belt assemblies; to require the use of seat belt assemblies; to provide for certain exemptions from use; to provide for the use of passive restraint devices; to authorize the Commissioner to promulgate regulations; to provide for the severability of the provisions of this Act; to specify the penalties for violating this Act; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

Section 1. Short Title. This Act shall be known as "The Vehicle Occupant Protection Act."

Section 2. Definitions. The following words and phrases when used in this Act shall for the purpose of this Act have the meanings respectively ascribed to them in this Section, except where the context otherwise requires:

- (a) "Available". With respect to safety belts, a safety belt which is not fastened around the front of a motor vehicle occupant's body.
- (b) "Bus". Every motor vehicle designed for carrying more than 10 passengers.
- (c) "Commissioner". The Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.
- (d) "Department". The Department of Public Safety.
- (e) "Designated seating position". Any plain view location intended by the manufacturer to provide seating accommodation while the vehicle is in motion, for a person at least as large as a fifth percentile adult female, except auxiliary seating accommodations such as temporary or folding jump seats.
- (f) "Driver". Every person who drives or is in actual physical control of a vehicle.
- (g) "Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR)". The sum of the unloaded vehicle weight, rated cargo load, and 150 pounds times the vehicle's designated seating capacity. However, for school buses, the minimum occupant weight allowance shall be 120 pounds.
- (h) "Highway". The entire width between the boundary lines of every way publicly maintained when any part thereof is open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel.
- (i) "Lap belt assembly". A seat belt assembly for pelvic restraint.
- (j) "Lap and shoulder belt assembly". A seat belt assembly which is a combination of pelvic and upper torso restraints.

- (k) "Motor vehicle". Every vehicle which is self-propelled.
- (l) "Multipurpose passenger vehicle". Every motor vehicle designed to carry 10 passengers or less which is constructed either on a truck chassis or with special features for occasional off-highway operation.
- (m) "Open-body type vehicle". A vehicle having no occupant compartment top or an occupant compartment top that can be installed or removed by the user at his convenience.
- (n) "Passenger car". Every motor vehicle, except a motorcycle, a motor-driven cycle, and a multipurpose vehicle, designed for carrying 10 passengers or less.
- (o) "Passive restraint system". An inflatable air bag or other protective device which requires no action by the occupants other than would be required if such protective system were not present in the vehicle and which has been determined by the Commissioner to provide at least the protection afforded by the seat belt assemblies by Section 3 of this Act.
- (p) "Seat belt assembly". Any strap, webbing, or similar device designed to secure a person in a motor vehicle in order to mitigate the results of any accident, including all necessary buckles and other fasteners, and all hardware designed for installing such seat belt assembly in a motor vehicle.
- (q) "Truck". A motor vehicle with motive power designed primarily for the transportation of property or special purpose equipment.
- (r) "Vehicle". Every device in, upon or by which any person or property is or may be transported or drawn upon a highway excepting devices moved by human power or used exclusively upon stationary rails or tracks.

Section 3. Lap and shoulder belts required.

- (a) Every passenger car manufactured or assembled on or after January 1, 1965, shall be equipped with lap belt assemblies for use in the driver's and one other front seating position.
- (b) Every passenger car manufactured or assembled on or after January 1, 1968, shall be equipped with a lap belt assembly for each permanent passenger seating position, and shall be equipped with at least two lap and shoulder belt assemblies for use in front seating positions, except that convertibles and open body vehicles are required only to have lap belts at each seating position.
- (c) Every truck and multipurpose passenger vehicle, with a GVWR of 10,000 pounds or less, manufactured on or after January 1, 1972, shall be equipped with a lap and shoulder belt assembly for each outboard seating position that includes the wind shield header within the head impact area, and with a lap belt assembly or lap and shoulder belt assembly for each other designated seating position, provided that in convertibles, open body

type vehicles, and walk-in van-type trucks only a lap belt assembly or lap and shoulder belt assembly shall be installed in each designated seating position.

(d) Every truck and multipurpose passenger vehicle with a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds manufactured on or after January 1, 1972, shall have either a lap belt assembly or lap and shoulder belt assembly at each designated seating position.

(e) Every bus manufactured on or after January 1, 1972, shall have at the driver's designated position either a lap belt assembly or a lap and shoulder belt assembly.

Section 4. Controls on Sale and Removal of Seat Belt Assemblies.

(a) No person shall distribute, have for sale, offer for sale, or sell any seat belt assembly for use in a motor vehicle unless it meets all applicable requirements established by the Department which shall provide for the quality and effectiveness of such assemblies.

(b) No person shall wholly or partially remove or disconnect any seat belt assembly that is required by Section 3 of this Act to be installed in a motor vehicle, except temporarily for cleaning, repair or replacement.

(c) No person shall operate on the highways of this State any motor vehicle unless the vehicle is equipped with all of the seat belt assemblies with which it is required to be equipped by Section 3 of this Act.

(d) No person shall operate on the highways of this State any motor vehicle required by Section 3 of this Act to be equipped with seat belt assemblies unless such seat belt assemblies are in good condition and readily usable.

Section 5. Use of Lap and Shoulder Belts Required.

(a) The driver of a motor vehicle shall not operate said vehicle upon the highways of this State which is required by Section 3 of this Act to be equipped with a lap belt assembly or lap and shoulder belt assembly unless he has securely fastened all such safety belts around his body.

(b) No person shall operate any motor vehicle in which there is a passenger seating position with an available lap belt assembly if there is a person six years of age or older, but less than 16 years of age riding in the vehicle without such lap belt assembly being fastened around the front of his body.

(c) No person 16 years of age or older shall ride as a passenger in any motor vehicle in which there is a passenger seating position with an available lap belt assembly, or lap and shoulder belt assembly unless he has fastened all of such safety belts around the front of his body.

(d) The requirements to use a safety belt shall not apply to a person:

- (1) While he is operating a motor vehicle in a rearward direction;
- (2) If he possesses a written statement from a qualified physician that he belongs to a class of persons whose use of safety belts has been declared by the Commissioner to subject the class members to safety risks, due to physical unfitness, including body size, or other medical problems of the members, that outweigh the safety and economic benefits to the public and class members from such use; or
- (3) If he belongs to a class of persons whose necessary occupational activities have been determined by the Commissioner to be hampered unreasonably by safety belt use, but only while he is engaged in such occupation.

(e) The requirement to insure safety belt use by a passenger six years of age or older, but less than 16 years of age, shall not apply to a driver with respect to any such passenger who belongs to a class of persons whose use of safety belts has been determined by the Commissioner to subject the class members to safety risks, due to the physical unfitness including body size, or other medical problems of the members, that outweigh the safety and economic benefit to the public and class members from such use.

Section 6. Passive Restraint Systems. Notwithstanding the provisions of any other Section of this Act, any motor vehicle equipped with an operable passive restraint system shall not be required to be equipped with any seat belt assembly, and notwithstanding any provision of this Act, any occupant of a motor vehicle who is protected by an operable passive restraint system shall not be required to use any lap or shoulder belt assembly unless said motor vehicle was equipped by the manufacturer with an available lap belt or shoulder belt assembly: provided, however, that such passive restraint system shall comply with regulations authorized by Section 8 of this Act.

Section 7. Effect of Nonuse in Civil Litigation. Failure to use any belt in violation of this Act shall not diminish recovery for damages arising out of the ownership, maintenance, or use of a motor vehicle.

Section 8. Authority to Promulgate Regulations. The Commissioner is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this Act.

Section 9. Severability. In the event any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase of this Act shall be declared or adjudged invalid or unconstitutional, such adjudication shall in no manner affect the other sections, subsections, sentences, clauses, or phrases of this Act, which shall remain of full force and effect, as if the section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase so declared or adjudged invalid or unconstitutional were not originally a part hereof. The General Assembly hereby declares that it would have passed the remaining parts of this Act if it had known that such parts or parts thereof would be declared or adjudged invalid or unconstitutional.

Section 10. Penalties.

(a) Any person who violates any provision of Sections 3 or 4 of this Act shall be punished as for a misdemeanor.

(b) Any person who violates any provision of Section 5 of this Act shall be fined not less than \$10 nor more than \$25.

Section 11. General Repealer. All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are hereby repealed.

South Carolina

TO REQUIRE THE USE OF SAFETY BELTS IN CERTAIN MOTOR VEHICLES AND TO PROVIDE PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. The purpose of this Act is to reduce the number and severity of injuries and accidents on the highways by requiring certain drivers and passengers in motor vehicles to use lap and shoulder belts.

SECTION 2. The following when used in this Act shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except when the context clearly requires otherwise.

(a) "Bus" means every motor vehicle designed for carrying more than ten passengers.

(b) "Commissioner" means the Chief Highway Commissioner of the State Highway Department.

(c) "Department" means the State Highway Department.

(d) "Driver" means every person who drives or is in actual physical control of a vehicle.

(e) "Gross weight" means the weight of a vehicle without load plus the weight of any load thereon.

(f) "Highway" means the entire width between the boundary lines of every way publicly maintained when any part thereof is open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel.

(g) "Implement of husbandry" means every vehicle designed or adapted and used exclusively for agricultural operations and only incidentally operated or moved upon the highways.

(h) "Motor vehicle" means every vehicle which is self-propelled.

(i) "Multipurpose passenger vehicle" means every motor vehicle designed to carry ten passengers or less which is constructed either on a truck or with special features for occasional off-highway operation.

(j) "Owner" means a person, other than a lienholder, having the property in or title to a vehicle. The term includes a person entitled to the use and possession of a vehicle subject to a security interest in another person, but excludes a lessee under a lease not intended as security.

(k) "Passenger car" means every motor vehicle designed for carrying ten passengers or less except motorcycles and multipurpose passenger vehicles.

(l) "Special mobile equipment" means every vehicle not designed or used primarily for the transportation of persons or property and only incidentally operated or moved over a highway, included but not limited to ditch

digging apparatus, well boring apparatus and road construction and maintenance machinery such as asphalt spreaders, bituminous mixers, bucket loaders, tractors other than truck tractors, ditchers, levelling graders, finishing machines, motor graders, road rollers, scarifiers, earth moving carry-alls and scrapers, power shovels and drag lines, and self-propelled cranes and earth moving equipment. The term does not include house trailers, dump trucks, truck mounted transit mixers, cranes or shovels, or other vehicles designed for the transportation of persons or property to which machinery has been attached.

(m) "Truck-tractor" means every motor vehicle designed and used primarily for drawing other vehicles and not so constructed as to carry a load other than as part of the weight of the vehicle and load so drawn.

(n) "Vehicle" means every device in, upon or by which any person or property is or may be transported or drawn upon a highway except devices moved by human power or used exclusively upon stationary rails or tracks.

SECTION 3. The provisions of this act shall apply to all motor vehicles operated upon the highways of this State.

SECTION 4.

(a) Every passenger car manufactured or assembled after July 1, 1967, which is brought into this State, shall be equipped with at least lap belt assemblies for use in the driver's and one other front seating position.

(b) Every passenger car manufactured or assembled after July 1, 1969, which is brought into this State, shall be equipped with a lap belt assembly for each permanent passenger seating position.

(c) Every passenger car manufactured or assembled after July 1, 1971, which is brought into this State, shall be equipped with at least two shoulder belt assemblies for use in front seating position.

(d) Every truck, bus and multipurpose passenger vehicle manufactured or assembled after July 1, 1971, which is brought into this State, shall be equipped with a lap belt assembly or with a lap and shoulder belt assembly in the driver's seating position.

(e) Every truck tractor manufactured or assembled after July 1, 1965, which is brought into this State, that is designed to draw a vehicle with a gross weight over ten thousand pounds shall be equipped with a lap belt assembly for use in the driver's seating position by January 1, 1975.

(f) The Commissioner may except specified types of motor vehicles or seating positions within any motor vehicle from the requirements imposed by items (a) through (e) of this section when compliance would be impractical.

(g) No person shall install, distribute, have for sale, offer for sale or sell any belt for use in motor vehicles unless it meets current minimum standards and specifications of the United States Department of Transportation.

(h) Every owner shall maintain belts and assemblies required by this Act in proper condition and in a manner that will enable passengers to use them.

(i) Every school bus, public or private, shall be equipped with seat belts in the driver's seating position.

(j) This Act shall not apply to implements or husbandry or special mobile equipment.

SECTION 5.

(a) Every driver of a motor vehicle operated on any highway shall wear a properly adjusted and fastened lap belt.

(b) Item (a) shall not apply to:

1. A driver in a seating position that is not equipped with a lap belt.

2. A driver frequently stopping and leaving the vehicle so long as the speed of the vehicle between stops does not exceed fifteen miles per hour.

3. A driver possessing a written indication from a physician that he is unable for medical or physical reasons to wear a lap belt.

4. A driver possessing a certificate or license endorsement issued by the department, or a similar agency in another state or country, indicating he is unable for medical, physical or other valid reasons to wear a lap belt.

SECTION 6.

(a) Every driver of a motor vehicle operated on any highway shall wear a properly adjusted and fastened shoulder belt.

(b) Item (a) shall not apply:

1. To a driver in a seating position that is not equipped with a usable lap belt.

2. To a driver in a seating position that is not equipped with a usable shoulder belt.
3. To a driver frequently stopping and leaving the vehicle so long as the speed of the vehicle between stops does not exceed fifteen miles per hour.
4. To a driver possessing a written indication from a physician that he is unable for medical or physical reasons to wear a lap belt or a shoulder belt.
5. To a driver possessing a certification or license endorsement issued by the department, or a similar agency in another state or country, indicating he is unable for medical, physical or other valid reasons to wear a lap belt or a shoulder belt.
6. When use of the shoulder belt would interfere with operation of the vehicle.

SECTION 7.

- (a) Every passenger of a motor vehicle operated on any highway shall wear a properly adjusted and fastened lap belt, or a properly adjusted and fastened lap belt and shoulder belt if his seating position is so equipped, unless such use is not possible, safe or reasonable or unless such passenger belongs to a class of persons exempted for medical, physical or occupational reasons under rules adopted by the department. It shall be unlawful to wear a shoulder belt without also using a lap belt.
- (b) The driver shall be responsible for compliance with the provisions of this Act for those passengers between the age of five and eighteen.
- (c) Children under five years of age shall be exempt from the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 8. Failure to use any belt in violation of this Act shall not diminish recovery for damages arising out of the ownership, maintenance or use of a motor vehicle.

SECTION 9. Any persons violating the provisions of this Act shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction shall be punished by a fine of not less than ten dollars nor more than twenty-five dollars. The court may suspend all or any part of the penalty upon such terms and conditions as the court shall prescribe. Such conditions may include driving with no further traffic violations during a specified time or performing or refraining from performing such acts as may be ordered by the court.

SECTION 10. Any violation of this Act shall not be included as a violation under the provisions of Section 46-196, Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1962.

SECTION 11. This Act shall take effect January 1, 1975 except that warning tickets only shall be issued by law enforcement personnel until July 1, 1975.

THE TYPICAL STATE SAFETY BELT USAGE BILL

The bill presented below represents how most proposed safety belt usage laws are drafted. Numerous technical objections can be raised against this proposed law, because it fails to state its purpose, define terms, or specify objections. Such criticisms can often be avoided if more attention is given to how the bill is worded and its contents.

SYNOPSIS: This Bill requires occupants of passenger vehicles to wear seat belts while riding on the streets and highways of this state.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

To require all drivers and passengers of any passenger automobile vehicles to wear seat belts while traveling in such vehicles upon any public road, street or highway of this state, and providing penalty for violation thereof.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF

SECTION 1. It shall be unlawful for any person to operate or ride as a passenger in any passenger vehicle or automobile on a public street, road or highway of this state while not wearing seat belts, the type which is commonly strapped around the waist or lap of the driver or passenger, if such vehicle is equipped with such safety belt, or if such vehicle was originally equipped with such equipment.

SECTION 2. Any person who violates the provisions of this Act shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punishable by a fine of not less than \$25.00 nor more than \$50.00. Each violation of this Act shall constitute a separate offense.

SECTION 3. This Act shall not be construed as making available a defense of contributory negligence on account of the failure to wear seat belts in any civil action brought under the laws of

SECTION 4. All laws or parts of laws which conflict with this Act are repealed.

SECTION 5. The provisions of this Act are severable. If any part of the Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, such declaration shall not affect the part which remains.

SECTION 6. This Act shall become effective immediately upon its passage and approval by the Governor, or upon its otherwise becoming a law.

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