



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Revisions to Transportation Laws Improve Safety and Efficiency

In each legislative session, only a few bills reach the governor's desk. For this reason, lawmakers creatively piece together legislation. This year the Catch-22 bill institutes primary enforcement of Missouri's seat belt law and repeals the need to undergo safety inspections.

With more than 500 reasons for a police officer to pull you over, it is almost surprising that you cannot be pulled over for not wearing a seatbelt. However, Senate Bill 17 will create a primary seat belt law. Law enforcement and the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) are trying to bring Missouri's annual roadway death toll to below 1,000. When similar legislation has passed in other states, it has reduced traffic-related by 7 percent.

According to MoDOT, approximately 68 percent of those who die in Missouri traffic accidents were not wearing their safety belt. This is especially troubling when you consider that safety belt usage is actually falling. Usage rates dropped from 77 percent in 2005 to 75 percent last year. That is the first time since 1998 that usage rates have not increased.

Currently, officers can issue tickets for failing to buckle up only if they have pulled over the vehicle for another reason. SB 17 allows police officers to pull over a vehicle if they see anyone not wearing a seatbelt, unless there are more passengers than belts.

The Catch-22 relates to vehicle inspections. According to the Missouri Safety Coalition, vehicle inspections also save lives. However, inspections are seen as a nuisance in rural areas. I know it takes me almost half a day to get one vehicle inspected, with the drive to the mechanic and then the inspection.

Currently, motorists must pass an inspection every two years to license their vehicle. The two-year window almost makes the inspection obsolete. For instance, if a problem occurs after you've passed inspection, you have two years to fix it. Also, it gives a false premise if you drive your car more than the average person your car is safe and doesn't need to be inspected more often.

The question becomes is it worth giving up a few seconds of your time to buckle up to gain several minutes of your time by not having to take your car for a vehicle inspection?

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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