

10 States Get OK On Billboards

The Federal Highway Administration has approved outdoor advertising control legislation adopted in 10 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and has signed interim agreements with five other states that have passed laws meeting most of the federal standards.

The packs set up precise standards regulating the size, position, zoning, spacing and lighting of billboards along interstate and primary road systems.

Several other states are also considering legislation to clear their highway areas of unsightly or view-obstructing billboards.

A MAJOR IMPETUS for highway view preservation is the 1965 federal Highway Beautification Act providing for billboard controls, screening of roadside junk yards and landscaping.

Under this legislation, non-complying states are threatened with a loss of 10 per cent of federal highway funds contributed toward both interstate and primary highway systems.

The deadline for compliance was Jan. 1, but Alan S. Boyd, secretary of the Department of Transportation, said no penalties will be applied this year.

Jurisdictions which have complied with federal requirements are Maryland, Alaska, California, Connecticut, Vermont, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Kentucky, Rhode Island, Utah, Virginia and Hawaii.

New York, Maine, Minnesota, Delaware and Pennsylvania have signed interim agreements with the Federal Highway Administration.

OPPOSITION to billboard control has come principally from tourist-orientated towns, such as hotel, motel and restaurant owners, and, in some states, outdoor advertising companies.

Garden clubs and conservationists have been avid supporters.

Some legislators in Oklahoma and North Carolina denounced the provision for withholding federal funds from non-complying states as blackmail.

The North Carolina Legislature passed a bill last year banning billboards from an area within 600 feet of all interstate and federally aided primary highways, except in commercial and industrial areas.

A provision was added, however, that the bill would not become effective until federal beautification funds were provided. North Carolina authorities said these funds have not yet been made available.

The Oklahoma Legislature passed two bills this year designed to comply with the federal act. One bans billboards within 660 feet of the edge of federal or interstate rights-of-way and the other requires screening of junk yards.

VERMONT passed one of the stiffest laws this year. It was vigorously opposed by the Vermont Advertising Co. and by lobbyists who repeatedly made unsuccessful efforts to water it down. Billboard interests asserted that under the law, free enterprise would be sold down the river.

The Vermont law would ban all off-premise private advertising and substitute state-owned directional signs with state-owned plazas in larger areas.

Businesses would apply to the highway district for signs. Each would pay a \$50 fee and be entitled to four directional signs. After the state covers an area with signs permitted, all off-premise private signs would be ordered down by January 1970, or five years after the original license was issued.

TEXAS has taken no action to ban billboards, but the state legislature adopted a resolution last year authorizing the State Highway Commission to discuss highway beautification with federal representatives.

Hearings are under way in Minnesota to remove about 9,000 signs for which owners sought no permits. Some owners are tearing down old signs rather than buy permits.

Wisconsin has a billboard law applying to the interstate system but not for most other highways.



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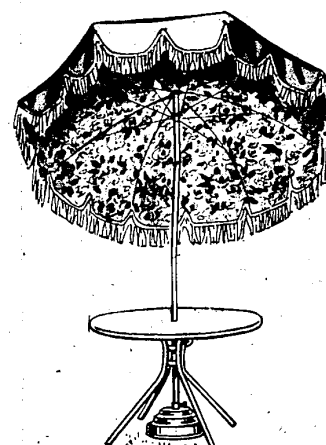
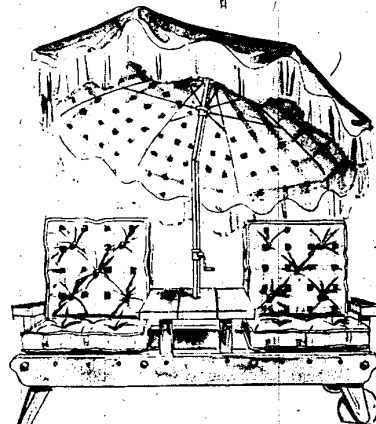
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