

Mandatory seat belt law pushed by McNamee

By Karen Hermes Smith
staff writer

Rep. Ruth McNamee, R-Birmingham, predicted the state House will pass a bill this week requiring all persons traveling in the front seat of vehicles in Michigan to wear safety belts for a three-year trial period.

If approved, the proposed legislation would go to the state senate for its consideration.

"I believe it should get the vote," said McNamee, Republican co-sponsor of the legislation. If signed into law, Michigan would be the first state to require mandatory safety belt use. A \$10 fine would be charged for violators.

The bill, which was expected to be voted on Tuesday, is supported by more than 40 state representatives and the democratic coalition she has ever seen, McNamee said.

The coalition includes doctors, educators, insurance companies, representatives of automobile manufacturers and safety organizations like the Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County.

ments against it just sort of fade away when I look at the statistics about the safety of persons with their harness belt in place."

The legislation would save 300 lives a year in Michigan, Secretary of State Richard Austin has predicted.

In on-the-street interviews in Birmingham, six out of nine persons said they support such a law. Two said they don't, one was undecided.

"If it (the law) saves lives, it's important," said Vivian Lieberman of Birmingham, who said she always wears her safety belt "except when backing down the driveway."

Agreed Estate Malarney, 43, of Birmingham, "I think it (saving lives) is worth it (the law)."

"If you get in an accident, seatbelts can keep you from going through the windshield," said Ruth Callewert of Troy.

"I have used that law in Canada and I have appreciated it," said Irene Mulhauser of Huntington Woods. "I favor it, but I'm lazy."

But Birmingham's Steven Perkins said the law would take away individuals' rights. "I don't like it," he said. "It's up to everyone to decide what to do."

The legislation was introduced this spring after the current law requiring restraints for children ages 4 and under went into effect.

"PEOPLE HAVE accepted this (legislation for children) and have accepted the fact the government is concerned about this and will act on the safety of people in vehicles," McNamee said.

The lawmaker said she is putting aside her usual stand against additional government regulation in sponsoring this legislation.

"I don't want government regulation without a good cause," she said. "... (But) the government is responsible for (the) safety (of citizens)."

"It's justifiable for the government to step in when the safety of just one person is involved."

Incidents where safety belts cause injuries or even death by retaining the victim in the place of impact are "way down in the very minority of accidents," McNamee said.

"The statistics would heavily support the statement we are safer with a belt on."

Those who have medical reasons for not wearing safety belts — following surgery, for example — could be exempted from the law, McNamee said.

The legislation would require no purchase — most cars on the road today have safety belts.



At the inauguration

Olga Dworin, left, of Farmington Hills was one of the honored guests at the inauguration of David Adamany as president of Wayne State University. Shown seated with Dr. Jack Ryan of Royal Oak, Dworin has led beautification efforts at the university during the past decade.

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