

Lawmakers, public split on seat-belt bill

By Diane Gals
staff writer

A bill mandating front seat passengers to wear seat belts is receiving mixed responses from state legislators and motorists.

House Bill 4203, presented by Rep. David Hollister, D-Lansing, says offenders of the seat belt requirement would be subject to a maximum \$10 fine. Individuals who are not physically able to wear the belt would be exempt. The bill law would be tried on a three-year, experimental basis. The House of Representatives is expected to vote on the bill this week and if it passes, it will go to the Senate.

Amendments to the bill were tacked on last week during heated rounds of debate. They include anyone may get an exemption by applying to the Michigan Secretary of State; there will be no fines for one year and motorists will be able to acquire an exemption from wearing helmets by applying to the Michigan Secretary of State.

"I find the helmet amendment most objectionable, because it has nothing to do with this bill, but any law will be better than nothing," Hollister said. "Once the auto capital of the world breaks the ice, other states may follow."

If the bill passes the House and earns the Senate nod, Michigan would be the first state in the country to mandate wearing seat belts. Supporters say the law will save lives and money by reducing accidents.

Safety restraints can cut fatalities caused in traffic accidents by 60 percent, according to the Traffic Improvement Association.

However, some legislators are adamantly against the bill. Their primary argument is that individuals should be able to choose whether they want to wear a restraint.

"I DON'T FEEL legislation should be required to tell people not to put a banana peel at the foot of their steps," said Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington. Rep. Maxine Berman, D-Southfield,

reports her constituent mail and telephone calls are 11-to-1 in favor of the bill. An admittedly unscientific poll taken by radio station WJR showed 60 percent of the callers were in favor of the bill and 40 percent were opposed.

Berman said she supports the bill, but opposes tacking on the amendments.

She said everyone should have a choice of whether they want to wear a seatbelt. But if drivers lose control of their cars, and are thrown out of their seats because they were not using a belt, then their decision affects everyone on the road.

"There are tremendous losses to this state by injuries of people in accidents, and those costs are magnified hundreds of times for people who are not wearing their seat belts compared to people who are," she said.

Hollister lists benefits of passing the bill. For instance:

- If 50 percent of the people used their seat belts last year in Michigan, 150 lives would be saved.
- If 70 percent of the people used

their seat belts last year in Michigan, 300 lives would be saved.

• The state's health care costs would drop \$200 million a year.

• The Department of Social Services budget could save \$24 million annually.

"THEY (OPPOSERS) use the argument that everyone should be able to choose if they want to wear seat belts when the point is, if they go through the windshield, then I have to pay for it," Hollister said.

The bill is backed by a number of different interest groups, including automobile and life insurance companies. The automobile companies also support the bill because it may nullify the much more expensive proposal of installing air bags, according to a source who asked to remain anonymous.

If the bill passes, officials from the Automobile Club of Michigan promise to lower premiums on personal injury protection by 20 percent, if the insured

certify that they wear seatbelts, according to a AAA spokesman.

THE AVERAGE SAVINGS would be between \$11 and \$24 annually, and it could run as high as \$90, he said.

A study conducted by AAA found that \$51 million could be saved annually through personal injury claims that are expected to be reduced if the law went into effect.

"There are 200 severe auto injuries in Michigan each year, and over a lifetime the costs to the state are \$4 million per person. Any reduction would be a great savings," the AAA spokesman said.

All law enforcement people would be in favor of any means of "keeping people from going into the dashboard," according to Hollin G. Tobin, Southfield director of public safety.

"Anyone who has ever been at the scene of an accident would be in favor of the bill," he said.

There are many accidents where people are thrown out of the car, and are severely injured, according to

Southfield police officer Steve Zultowski.

"This wouldn't happen if these people were wearing seat belts," Zultowski said. "It's gotten to a point where I feel uncomfortable not wearing a seat belt, because it's gotten to be like a security blanket."

The following are statistics compiled by the Michigan State Police on traffic accidents and their relationship to wearing seat belts:

- During 1982, there were 18,064 people in Michigan that were in accidents and wearing their seat belts. In that group there were seven fatalities, 1,501 injured and 15,556 not injured.
- In 1982, 61,109 people in accidents were not using seatbelts. Of those people 63 died, 11,409 injured and 49,698 not injured.
- In 1982 15 percent of drivers and passengers in Michigan used restraints, which is up from 11 percent in 1981.
- Last year there was an accident in Michigan every one minute and 47 seconds. One person was injured every four minutes and two seconds.

New car checklist avoids problems

The day you take delivery of your new car is always a special one. Unfortunately, many people blinded by "new car fever" forget to look the car over before driving it home, says the Southfield-based Automotive Information Council (AIC).

Many misunderstandings could be avoided, says AIC, if consumers would spend just a few minutes looking over their new car and clearing up any questions they have before driving it home. AIC has compiled the following list of tips for delivery day:

• Avoid taking delivery of the car during the dark, evening hours — it's much easier to give the car a thorough inspection in the daylight.

• Check the options you ordered by comparing the window sticker, the vehicle and the bill of sale.

• Cars can be damaged by accident, theft or vandalism while in transit to the dealer. Consequently, a small flaw

can inadvertently be overlooked while the car is being prepped by the dealer. For this reason, it is very important to inspect the paint, trim and body. Make sure all the doors, hood and trunk lid line up properly and that they all open and close easily. Check to see that such items as cigarette lighters and spare tire jacks are there.

• Check the inside of the car to make sure the upholstery and interior trim all fit correctly. While you are sitting in the car, get the owner's manual out and look it over for the placement and function of all the knobs and buttons. Once at home, you can read the owner's manual more carefully, noting all warranty information and the maintenance schedule recommended to keep your new car running right.

If you should find a problem, says AIC, note it and talk it over with the service department before you leave so that an adjustment can be made.

Coronary care course offered

A three-day program on advanced coronary care will be presented by the American Heart Association of Michigan on Nov. 24 at the Heart Association office in Lathrup Village.

The course is designed to help nursing personnel design a plan of care for the patient with cardiovascular crisis, enhance awareness of risk factors, and demonstrate professional accountability to the patient.

Included among the topics to be covered are: interpretation of EKGs, lung sounds, echocardiograms, cardiac catheterization and nursing management of shock. Faculty for the program will be cardiologists and nurse clinicians.

Tuition for the course is \$75, which includes callipers and printed materials. Registrations must be received by Oct. 28.

For more information contact Eleanor D. Peterson, American Heart Association of Michigan, P.O. Box 160, 16310 12 Mile, Lathrup Village 48078. The phone number is 557-9500.

The American Heart Association of Michigan is a United Way agency.

Nightclub seeks 'Flashdancers'

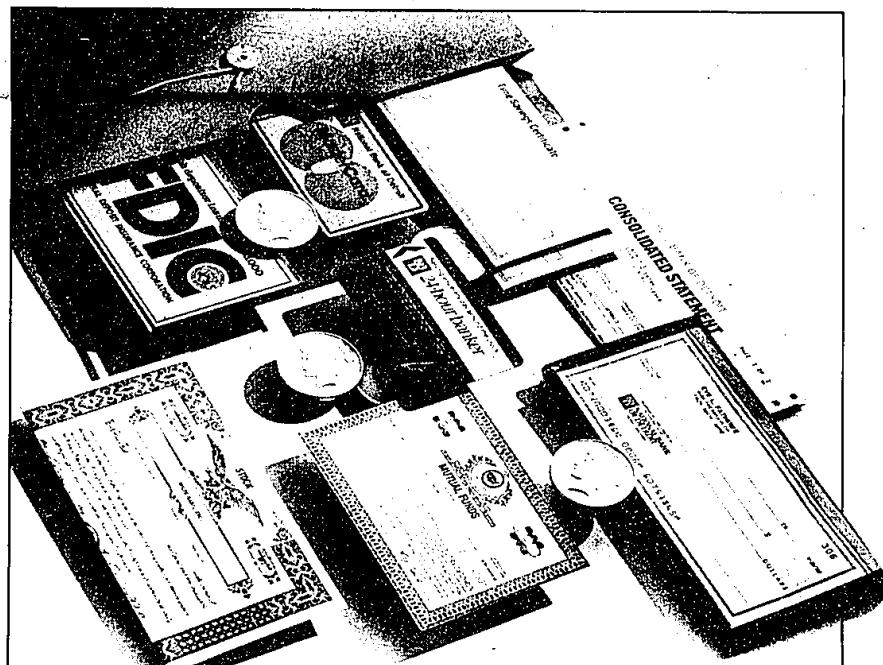
Mr. Laff's nightclub in Farmington Hills will be auditioning for dancers to a "Flashdance" to perform choreographed dances to current music hits every Wednesday night.

Auditions will be from 11 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. Saturday at the club Orchard Lake between 13 and 14 Mile. Dance teacher and choreographer Annette Bergasse will run the auditions. A jazz and ballet background is required as well as performance experience. Applicants must bring a resume and be between 18 and 30 years old.

Final auditions will be Nov. 2. Finalists will be judged by a panel of celebrity and dance judges. The audition is open to the public.

After the final decisions have been made, the chosen women will choreograph and perform "Flashdance"-style solo dance acts every Wednesday night in three short sets. There will be six women chosen.

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