

# Cruce's seat belt bill passed

By Tim Richard  
staff writer

It's up to drivers whether Michigan's new seat belt law saves lives when it takes effect July 1.

The highly amended bill sailed through the House in less than an hour Tuesday after 3 1/2 years of work by Sen. Doug Cruce, R-Troy, and Rep. David Hollister, D-Lansing.

"It could save 150 to 300 lives in our state each year, depending on how many people use them," said Secretary of State Richard Austin, interviewed in the Capitol corridor after the 64-41 House vote.

The heart of the law says: "Each driver and front-seat passenger of a motor vehicle operated on a street or highway in this state shall wear a properly adjusted and fastened safety belt." Children under 4 are covered by a separate law.

All Observer & Eccentric area representatives from Oakland County supported the measure.

CRUCE, WHO began working on it while a House member in 1981, sat in a special guest seat in the House chamber during the debate.

The bill must go back to the Senate for concurrence in one amendment — a paragraph voiding the law in 1989 if the federal government mandates air bags. "No problem with that," said Cruce, predicting it would be done this week and ready for Gov. James J.

Blanchard's signature.

The estimate of 300 lives saved and 35,000 serious injuries reduced is based on 70 percent of drivers and passengers complying with the law, according to Austin and the Automobile Club of Michigan, an insurer.

Other estimates of compliance ran as low as 30 percent. Canada, which has mandated seat belts, reportedly has 60-percent compliance.

BUT THERE are many exceptions which would reduce the law's lifesaving efforts:

- Police are to enforce the law "only as a secondary action when a driver of a motor vehicle has been detained for a suspected violation" of another regulation. Thus, occupants of a car could "buckle up" when they see the flashing lights of a patrol car and avoid being charged.

- The law applies only to front-seat occupants.

- The law doesn't apply to buses, school buses, motorcycles, mopeds and U.S. postal vehicles.

- No "points" shall be charged against a driver's record for a violation.

- Fines are light — a maximum of \$10 during the last half of 1985, and \$25 thereafter, plus court costs.

- "Failure to wear a safety belt . . . may be considered evidence of negligence . . . However, such negligence shall not reduce the recovery for damages by more than 5 percent."

OPPONENTS CHARGED that seat belts should be mandated by Congress, not the individual states, and that other safety methods such as padded interiors were acceptable under federal rules.

"The three-part safety belt is the best possible protection," Cruce replied in an interview. "The others are lesser forms of safety. Crash tests have proved that. This is the best possible public policy."

The bill was stalled in the House almost as soon as Hollister introduced it in 1981. "I didn't introduce it until I came to the Senate (in 1983)," Cruce said. His two co-sponsors were Democrats — Minority Leader William Faust of Westland and Lana Pollack of Ann Arbor.

Cruce credited House committee testimony by Sheila Dinnine, a Royal Oak mother who lost a son in an auto accident, with stimulating his strong support of the measure.

MICHIGAN BECOMES the fourth state — after New Jersey, New York and Illinois — to require seat belts. Federal transportation regulations say the more expensive and cumbersome air bags would not be required if two-thirds of the U.S. population is protected by seat belt laws.

Cruce said passage of such laws by "10 or 11 large industrial states would bring us into compliance. We're one-third of the way there."

The bill was passed by the Senate

last year but fell four votes short in the House. This year it sailed through the Senate 25-9 and won eight votes more than necessary in the House.

Area supporters — one of whom spoke — included Maxine Berman, D-Southfield; W.V. Brotherton, R-Farmington; Mat Dunaskis, R-Lake Orion (district includes Oakland Township); Gregory Cruce, R-Troy; David Honigman, R-West Bloomfield; Judith Miller, R-Birmingham; and Gordon Sparks, R-Troy.

Cruce, Honigman and Miller are all freshmen and were casting their first votes on the measure.

THE VOTE was a foregone conclusion by Tuesday, and backers listened with some amusement as opponents made their final pitches for voter consumption.

"The feds don't have guts enough to pass the bill," roared Rep. Dominic Jacobetti, D-Negaunee, who argued it should be handled by federal legislation. "Maybe what each of you should do is run for Congress," he said — to delight the applause.

Rep. Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor, a lawyer and civil libertarian, blamed General Motors Corp. and Ford Motor Co. for "dangling this Saturn car project in front of the states saying 'you've got to pass it.' It's a pretty good lesson in mass hysteria created by a corporation-controlled media."

Thursday, February 21, 1985 O&E

(O&A)

## No liberal arts 'crisis,' according to educators

There is no "crisis" in the liberal arts. The field will grow in importance, concluded four nationally prominent educators at a forum on "The Future of the Liberal Arts in College and University Curricula."

About 250 people attended the forum at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. It featured Hanna Gray, president of the University of Chicago; Harold Shapiro, president of the University of Michigan; Henry Rosovsky, professor of economics and former dean of the faculty at Harvard University; and moderator John William Ward, president of the American Council of Learned Societies.

"EVERY PRESIDENT feels it incumbent to defend the liberal arts, but not science, mathematics, etc.," said Shapiro. "But I don't see a special crisis. Research in the field has never been stronger."

"In fact, scholarship in the humanities is stronger than the social sciences."

While agreeing that the pursuit of a liberal arts degree is not imperiled, Harvard's Rosovsky differed with Shapiro's definition of the liberal arts as comprising the humanities alone.

"The social and behavioral sciences also fall under this category," Rosovsky said. "As our society becomes even more technical and complex, we will need to know how to speak and write effectively, understand other cultures, have the capacity to reject shoddiness and learn in depth."

GRAY AGREED that the social sciences are now a part of a liberal arts education — a practice "unknown to earlier humanists."

"There is increasing pressure for vocational goals: accounting, technical accomplishments, getting that first job," said the Chicago president. "But without liberal arts training, these people are running the risk of being uneducated."

She continued: "The liberal arts are just as crucial to the future as ever."

## Three SEMTA seats in doubt

By Kathy Parrish  
staff writer

When a fellow Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority (SEMTA) board member greeted him before this week's meeting, Richard Manning just grinned.

"I hope it won't be the late Mr. Manning. Are they going to fire us today?" asked the SEMTA director from Redford Township.

"They can't fire us. We've been properly appointed," added Hamtramck retiree Chester Jurawicz, whose SEMTA board appointment also is being challenged.

"I can't get anyone to take my job," quipped Walter Franchuk, a SEMTA director looking for a replacement because he now heads the Macomb County Commission.

AFTER THEIR appointments last month by the Wayne County Commission, Garden City Mayor Vincent Fordell, Manning (a county commissioner) and Jurawicz got an enthusiastic reception. But they quickly found themselves in limbo.

The three were named Jan. 3 by a 9-0 vote (with one abstention) of suburban Wayne County commissioners, who have made out-Wayne appointments since the SEMTA law was amended in 1977. The hold-out vote was Commissioner W. Carl Boller of Brownstown Township, a political ally of Wayne County Executive William Lucas.

Then Lucas vetoed the appointments and submitted his own list of SEMTA directors — Fred Todd, his chief financial official; Taylor Mayor Cameron

Priebe; and Robert Paccelocco, a Plymouth businessman who owns Pamá Investment and Contractors.

The Lucas appointments were ratified 8-5, with six Detroit commissioners joined by Chairman John Heriot and Boller in overruling the fractured suburban group.

THE DISPUTE seems to boil down to whether

Wayne County's charter can give Lucas the right to appoint SEMTA directors.

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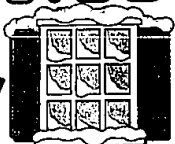
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