

Cruce's speed limit bill OK'd

Senate amends it heavily; no \$5 surtax

By Tim Richard
staff writer

They could call it the "Cruce-ler Bill."

The Michigan Senate last week passed 30-4, and sent to the House, a 65 mph speed limit bill sponsored by Doug Cruce, R-Troy.

But in two days of debate, senators introduced some elements from a broader bill sponsored by Sen. Richard Fessler, R-Commerce.

"It is not a bill which jeopardizes highway funds," Cruce told the Senate. He referred to the fact that his bill applied only to interstate freeways whereas Fessler's also covered four-lane divided highways such as US-23 (Ann Arbor-Flint corridor).

Most state officials believe federal aid could be cut off if Michigan went as far as Fessler wanted to go in raising speed limits.

Fessler's district includes West Bloomfield, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Township and Southfield Township. Cruce's district includes Birmingham and some of the Royal Oak area.

SENATORS failed to give Gov. James J. Blanchard what he wanted — a \$5 surtax on traffic tickets to finance more police patrols.

Cruce's bill will apply to 720 miles of rural interstate freeway — in areas of less than 50,000 population. "It is most likely to be signed by the governor," he said.

The Senate tacked on several amendments by voice vote during general orders debate. "Cruce would have provided a 'sunset' date of April 1989, at which time the speed limit would automatically drop back to 55 unless the Legislature acted again. Senators removed the sunset date, as in the Fessler bill.

Sen. Jack Faxon, D-Farmington Hills, won approval of an amendment to charge no "points" to a driver's record for conviction of speeding one to five mph over the limit.

Sen. Gilbert DiNello, D-East Detroit, blistered the points concept. "The Secretary of State keeps a record of your points for two years; then you have a clean slate. The insurance companies keep your points

almost forever," he said, charging insurers raise rates for drivers with points even when those drivers have no accidents.

Sen. Connie Binsfeld, R-Maple City, won support for her amendment to make fines "suggested" instead of "mandated," again bringing the Cruce bill closer to Fessler's version. "We have judges fully capable of making the punishment fit the crime," said Majority Leader John Engler, R-Mount Pleasant.

FESSLER LOST with his pet amendment — to make the speed limit 65 by day and 55 by night. That had been a key provision in his bill, intended to placate those opposed to raising the speed limit at all.

But Faxon countered that he can see as well "by the light of the moon" as by daylight, and that there is less traffic at night.

The Senate also shot down Fessler's request to pass both his bill

and Cruce's. He said it would force the House of Representatives to negotiate with Blanchard and pick one version.

"Let's give the tools to the House to work out the differences," he said. "It's irregular to write two bills on the exact same subject," objected Cruce.

Faxon, a lawmaker more than 20 years, agreed with Cruce.

"I never heard of two bills, in all my years, on the same subject," said Faxon, whose district includes Southfield. "After you perfect one bill, what's the purpose?"

After his bill was postponed for a week, then for a day, Fessler withdrew it entirely.

HERE'S THE schedule of penalties under Cruce's bill:

- One to five mph over the limit — zero points, \$20 fine.

- Six to 10 mph — one point, \$20 fine.

- 11-15 mph — two points, \$40 fine.



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