

Seat belt poll

Readers opposed to tougher seat belt law

By Wayne Paul
Staff writer

Proposed toughening of Michigan's seat belt law got a cool reception from participants in a recent Observer & Eccentric Newspapers phone-in survey.

Results weren't scientific, but opposition was heavy. Forty-one of the 67 callers opposed a bill giving po-

lice more leeway in ticketing those who don't wear seat belts.

"Police departments have too many options to pull drivers over and for too many reasons that aren't needed," said James Luke of Farmington Hills.

The bill would let police directly ticket weren't stopping them, without first stopping them for other traffic violations. But the majority

of callers thought it gave police too much power.

Mark O'Brien of Union Lake said the bill could lead to random traffic stops.

"It seems to me, with drivers going by at 40-50 miles per hour, a police officer couldn't even see if you're wearing a seat belt," he said.

Farmington Hills resident James Jewhurst called bill provisions an invasion of privacy.

"I THINK your automobile is as private as your home," he said.

Carl Decker of Southfield said he worried about a steady erosion of individual liberty.

"Once they pass this law, they'll go into one more law and it's not going to stop unless we stop it," he said.

Joann Mashaw of Birmingham said the existing seat belt law, enacted in 1985, should remain unchanged.

"People are getting enough tickets the way it is," she said.

In contrast, Karen Miller of Lathrup Village called seat belt use a vital public safety issue.

"I think something definitely

needs to be done," Miller said.

Sue Cromwell of Farmington Hills said she was most concerned about strict enforcement of the state's child safety seat law.

"I see too many kids sitting in people's laps in the front seat or bouncing around in the car," she said.

Not all callers identified themselves or left comments. Those who responded voluntarily called a special O & E telephone number between April 16 and 19 and were notified their comments could be used in an article.

State Rep. Barbara Dobb, R-West Bloomfield said she wasn't surprised by the results.

The bill is proposed by state Rep. Thomas Hickner, D-Ray City.

Despite backing from AAA, police organizations and automakers, it faces an uncertain future.

"I know there was an informal poll done a while back that showed only about 35 or 40 supporters," said Rep. James Kostera, D-Canton, a member of the House Transportation Committee. "But that was before people and insurance groups got active."

NBC opposed a bill giving panel on public's right to know

NBC News correspondent Carl Stern will be the featured speaker during a panel discussion of privacy versus the public's right to know, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 6, at the Birmingham Community House.

Stern, whose beat has included the U.S. Supreme Court, will be joined by panel members Dennis Archer, a former Michigan Supreme Court Justice, Thomas Fray, editorial page di-

rector for the Detroit News, George Goggans, president-elect of the Michigan State-Bar Association, and Oakland County Circuit Judge Hilda Gage.

Admission is free, but reservations are required. To reserve a seat, or for additional information, call the Community House program department, 644-5832. The Community House is at 380 S. Bates, Birmingham.

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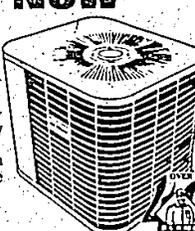
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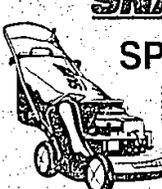
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