

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 881

99TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVE SCHROER.

1742H.011

D. ADAM CRUMBLISS, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To repeal section 307.178, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to evidence on the use of safety belts.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Section 307.178, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 307.178, to read as follows:

307.178. 1. As used in this section, the term "passenger car" means every motor vehicle designed for carrying ~~ten~~ **fifteen** persons or less and used for the transportation of persons; except that, the term "passenger car" shall not include motorcycles, motorized bicycles, motor tricycles, and trucks with a licensed gross weight of twelve thousand pounds or more.

2. Each driver, except persons employed by the United States Postal Service while performing duties for that federal agency which require the operator to service postal boxes from their vehicles, or which require frequent entry into and exit from their vehicles, and front seat passenger of a passenger car manufactured after January 1, 1968, operated on a street or highway in this state, and persons less than eighteen years of age operating or riding in a truck, as defined in section 301.010, on a street or highway of this state shall wear a properly adjusted and fastened safety belt that meets federal National Highway, Transportation and Safety Act requirements. No person shall be stopped, inspected, or detained solely to determine compliance with this subsection. The provisions of this section and section 307.179 shall not be applicable to persons who have a medical reason for failing to have a seat belt fastened about their body, nor shall the provisions of this section be applicable to persons while operating or riding a motor vehicle being used in agricultural work-related activities. Noncompliance with this subsection shall not constitute probable cause for violation of any other provision of law. The provisions

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

18 of this subsection shall not apply to the transporting of children under sixteen years of age, as
19 provided in section 307.179.

20 3. Each driver of a motor vehicle transporting a child less than sixteen years of age shall
21 secure the child in a properly adjusted and fastened restraint under section 307.179.

22 4. In any action to recover damages arising out of the ownership, common maintenance,
23 or operation of a motor vehicle, failure to wear a safety belt ~~[in violation of this section shall not]~~
24 **or misuse of a safety belt by any occupant of a passenger car may** be considered evidence
25 of comparative negligence **or may be admitted to mitigate damages.** ~~[Failure to wear a safety~~
26 ~~belt in violation of this section may be admitted to mitigate damages, but only under the~~
27 ~~following circumstances:-~~

28 ~~—— (1) Parties seeking to introduce evidence of the failure to wear a safety belt in violation~~
29 ~~of this section must first introduce expert evidence proving that a failure to wear a safety belt~~
30 ~~contributed to the injuries claimed by plaintiff;~~

31 ~~—— (2)~~ If the evidence supports such a finding **regarding comparative negligence or**
32 **mitigation of damages**, the trier of fact may find that the plaintiff's failure to wear a safety belt
33 ~~[in violation of this section]~~ **or misuse of a safety belt** contributed to the plaintiff's claimed
34 injuries[,] and may reduce the amount of the plaintiff's recovery by ~~an~~ **any** amount not to
35 exceed ~~one~~ **twenty-five** percent of the damages awarded after any reductions for comparative
36 negligence.

37 5. Except as otherwise provided for in section 307.179, each person who violates the
38 provisions of subsection 2 of this section is guilty of an infraction for which a fine not to exceed
39 ten dollars may be imposed. All other provisions of law and court rules to the contrary
40 notwithstanding, no court costs shall be imposed on any person due to a violation of this section.
41 In no case shall points be assessed against any person, pursuant to section 302.302, for a
42 violation of this section.

43 6. The state highways and transportation commission shall initiate and develop a
44 program of public information to develop understanding of, and ensure compliance with, the
45 provisions of this section. The commission shall evaluate the effectiveness of this section and
46 shall include a report of its findings in the annual evaluation report on its highway safety plan
47 that it submits to NHTSA and FHWA pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 402.

48 7. If there are more persons than there are seat belts in the enclosed area of a motor
49 vehicle, then the passengers who are unable to wear seat belts shall sit in the area behind the
50 front seat of the motor vehicle unless the motor vehicle is designed only for a front-seated area.
51 The passenger or passengers occupying a seat location referred to in this subsection is not in
52 violation of this section. This subsection shall not apply to passengers who are accompanying
53 a driver of a motor vehicle who is licensed under section 302.178.