

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 339

93RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES ST. ONGE (Sponsor), BIVINS, FRASER, SCHOEMEHL,
SKAGGS, THRELKELD, PAGE, LOWE (44), PARKER, SCHAAF, SCHNEIDER, SMITH (14), FAITH,
RUPP, BLAND, HUBBARD, KINGERY, BYRD, MEADOWS,
PEARCE AND COOPER (155) (Co-sponsors).

Read 1st time January 26, 2005 and copies ordered printed.

STEPHEN S. DAVIS, Chief Clerk

0163L.01I

AN ACT

To repeal section 307.178, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to seat 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Section A. Section 307.178, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 307.178, to read as follows: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 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, RSMo, 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; except that, a child less than four years of age shall be protected as required in section 210.104, RSMo. No person shall be stopped, inspected, or detained solely to determine

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.

14 compliance with this subsection; **however, nothing shall prohibit a law enforcement officer**
15 **from enforcing the provisions of this section if the violation is clearly visible to the officer**
16 **without stopping the vehicle.** The provisions of this section shall not be applicable to persons
17 who have a medical reason for failing to have a seat belt fastened about their body, nor shall the
18 provisions of this section be applicable to persons while operating or riding a motor vehicle
19 being used in agricultural work-related activities. Noncompliance with this subsection shall not
20 constitute probable cause for violation of any other provision of law **or for a search of the**
21 **driver, passenger, or vehicle.**

22 3. Each driver of a motor vehicle transporting a child four years of age or more, but less
23 than sixteen years of age, shall secure the child in a properly adjusted and fastened safety belt.

24 4. In any action to recover damages arising out of the ownership, common maintenance
25 or operation of a motor vehicle, failure to wear a safety belt in violation of this section shall not
26 be considered evidence of comparative negligence. Failure to wear a safety belt in violation of
27 this section may be admitted to mitigate damages, but only under the 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, the trier of fact may find that the plaintiff's
32 failure to wear a safety belt in violation of this section contributed to the plaintiff's claimed
33 injuries, and may reduce the amount of the plaintiff's recovery by an amount not to exceed one
34 percent of the damages awarded after any reductions for comparative negligence.

35 5. Each driver who violates the provisions of subsection 2 or 3 of this section is guilty
36 of an infraction for which a fine not to exceed [ten] **fifteen** dollars may be imposed. All other
37 provisions of law and court rules to the contrary notwithstanding, no court costs shall be imposed
38 on any person due to a violation of this section. In no case shall points be assessed against any
39 person, pursuant to section 302.302, RSMo, for a violation of this section.

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

45 7. If there are more persons than there are seat belts in the enclosed area of a motor
46 vehicle, then the driver and passengers are not in violation of this section.