

S J R

59

SENATE COMMITTEE REPORT

DATE: 4/25/90

FURTHER: Finance

DATE TURNED INTO OFFICE: 4/25/90

Resources

Committee considered

SJR 59

Relating to the discharge of ballast water by vessels entering the waters of Alaska.

and recommended:

- replace with _____ CS _____
- or adopt _____ CS _____
- attached amendment(s)
- _____ letter of intent adopted

- same title
- new title
- technical title change (HB only)

do pass

do not pass

no recommendation

individual recommendations

further referral to _____

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S):
Dept/Date:

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) _____

appropriation-no fiscal note

APPROVES PREVIOUS:
Dept/Date:

fiscal note(s) _____

zero fiscal note(s) OTG

Governor's bill w/fiscal note

SIGNING DO PASS:

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS:

SENATE AMENDMENT

1

BY: Harold Zaroff

TO: STR 59 SENATE BILL NO. 59

TO: _____ HOUSE BILL NO. _____

Page 2

Line 6 delete "115"

Line 9 - 11 delete all of (2)

STATE OF ALASKA
1989 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL VERSION: SJR 59
PUBLISH DATE: 4/22/90

FISCAL NOTE

REQUEST: _____

REVISION DATE: _____
TITLE: Prohibit Discharge of
Ballast Water
SPONSOR: Zharoff
REQUESTOR: _____

AGENCY: NONE
BRU: _____
COMPONENTS: _____

EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS)

	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94
OPERATING						
PERS. SERVICES						
TRAVEL						
CONTRACTUAL						
SUPPLIES						
EQUIPMENT						
LAND/BUILD.						
GRANTS/CLAIMS						
MISCELLANEOUS						
TOTAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
CAPITAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-
REVENUE	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

FUNDING: (THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS)

GENERAL FUNDS						
FEDERAL FUNDS						
OTHER						
TOTAL	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

POSITIONS:

FULL-TIME						
PART-TIME						
TEMPORARY						

ANALYSIS:

PREPARED BY:  SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON OIL & GAS

DATE: 4/22/90

PHONE No.: 465-4993



SENATOR FRED F. ZHAROFF

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

P. O. BOX 405, KODIAK, ALASKA 99615 (907) 486-5259

DURING SESSION:

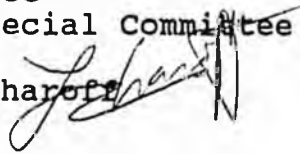
P. O. BOX V, JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811 • (907) 485-3473 • 485-3474

DISTRICT N

ALASKA PENINSULA • ALEUTIAN CHAIN • BRISTOL BAY • KODIAK ISLAND • LAKE CLARK/LAKE ILIAMNA • PRIBILOF ISLANDS • SHUMAGIN ISLANDS

MEMORANDUM

TO: Senator Drue Pearce
Chair - Senate Special Committee on Oil and Gas

FROM: Senator Fred F. Zharoff 

DATE: April 20, 1990

RE: Senate Joint Resolution 59 - "Relating to the discharge of ballast water by vessels entering the waters of Alaska."

I respectfully request that SJR 59 be scheduled for a hearing before the Senate Special Committee on Oil and Gas at the earliest opportunity.

SJR 59 is aimed at a national problem - the introduction of exotic species through ballast water. The problem has had especially serious repercussions in California and the Great Lakes region. So far -- to the best of our knowledge -- Alaska has been spared this problem, in which native species are overwhelmed and wiped out by the new species. The new species also have a tendency to cause major ecological disruptions.

SJR 59 calls on the U.S. Coast Guard to adopt regulations that would protect Alaska's ecosystem from the introduction of exotic species via ballast water.

SJR 59 is based on a resolution that was adopted late last year by the Pacific Series Legislative Task Force, made up of legislators from Alaska, California, Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

The following backup information is attached:

1. Letter and report regarding introduction of exotic species to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Estuary.
2. Summary of research paper on introduction of exotic species into the Great Lakes.
3. Information bulletin about zebra mussel problem in the Great Lakes.
4. Historical review of ballast water and the invasion of exotic species.

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

1416 NINTH STREET
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814
(916) 445-3531



1-1-79

Mr. Charles Fullerton
Director
National Marine Fisheries
Service, Southwest Region
300 S. Ferry St.
Terminal Island, CA 90731

Dear Mr. Fullerton:

In the last ten years the Sacramento-San Joaquin Estuary has been invaded by a number of exotic aquatic organisms. These include four species of copepods, a clam and an amphipod. The copepods originated in China and Japan and were brought in by ballast water of freighters or tankers. The origins of the clam and amphipod have not been determined but ballast water is the assumed mode of introduction as a wide variety of invertebrates and fish have been found to survive for weeks in ballast tanks.

All of the introductions have become abundant in the Estuary and some of them may be having adverse impacts on a native species of copepod that is an important food for larval striped bass.

The problem is not limited to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Estuary; the Great Lakes have been invaded by a fish, a cladoceran, a crab and an alga, all brought in by ballast water. The problem is undoubtedly world-wide: Japanese copepods have been found in Chilean fjords and a Chinese copepod has appeared in San Diego Bay. The problem is severe enough in the Great Lakes for the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to appeal to the U. S. Coast Guard, the State Department and the International Maritime Organization of the U.N. The Commission is asking for a regulation that will require ocean-going vessels entering the Great Lakes to first exchange their ballast water in the open ocean. The reasoning being that oceanic organisms are unlikely to survive in the fresh water of the Great Lakes. Alternate means of eliminating ballast water organisms are filtering and disinfection. However, filtering is not practical due to the small size of some of these organisms and disinfection is likely to result in the release of toxic substances to the environment.

The U. S. Coast Guard has the authority to adopt and enforce a regulation requiring exchange of ballast water at sea but their representatives have indicated to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission that it will take political and agency pressure to get such a regulation adopted.

Mr. Charles Fullerton

-2-

The Department plans to pursue the issue through the Western and International Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. I believe it would be most helpful if you would pursue the issue through federal channels.

If you want more detailed information on introductions into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Estuary, Pete Chadwick can see that it is provided. His telephone number is: 209-466-4421.

Sincerely,

Pete Bontadelli
Director

File: D, DRF, Exfile, Bay-Delta, Chron

Chadwick/aec

The Problem of the Accidental Introduction of Exotic Aquatic Organisms to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Estuary

In 1978, a new species of planktonic copepod (a small relative of shrimp) appeared in the catches of the DFG's Bay-Delta Zooplankton Study. When sent to the Smithsonian Institution for identification, it turned out to be Sinocalanus doerrii, a species previously known only from Mainland China. In 1979, Sinocalanus became very abundant throughout the Delta and extended into Suisun Bay. In the same year another exotic copepod was discovered in the zooplankton catches. It also proved to be a Chinese species, Limnithona sinensis. A third copepod also appeared that year but turned out to be one that had been previously taken in 1964 by the DFG and not seen since. This copepod was later found to be numerous in South San Francisco Bay and was described as a new species, Oithona davisae. Japanese scientists later found it in Tokyo Bay and other locations in Japan where it had been known for some time but misidentified under another name.

The story continues. In 1987, specimens of Pseudodiaptomus, a copepod, were taken a few times by the DFG and were initially thought to be strays from San Francisco Bay. The next year, however, these animals became very abundant and a check of the literature showed that Pseudodiaptomus had never been caught in the Bay. The Smithsonian identified our specimens as P. forbesi, a species from the China coast.

In addition to copepods, in the last few years an amphipod, Lagunogammarus, and a clam, Potamocorbula, have entered the estuary from foreign parts, and in the last twenty to thirty years, a shrimp, Palaemon, and a fish, the yellowfin goby, have also come in and established populations.

The mode of introduction of the exotic species is ballast water of freighters and tankers. A variety of invertebrates and fish have been found to remain alive for weeks in such water while being transported across oceans. When discharged at a ship's destination the exotic organisms may find conditions unsuitable and die off or they may be dispersed by currents and never establish breeding populations. Sooner or later, however, conditions will be favorable and a new species will gain a foothold.

The impact of the new organisms on the plankton and fish of Suisun Bay and the Delta is difficult to ascertain but Sinocalanus may have been responsible for the precipitate decline of the native Diaptomus copepod in 1979, the year Sinocalanus became established. The native Eurytemora copepod, which is the most important food for larval striped bass, seems to have coexisted well with Sinocalanus, but in 1988, its abundance was as much as two orders of magnitude lower than in any previous year. This may be due to Pseudodiaptomus or to predation by an exotic clam, Potamocorbula, which consumed the early life stages of Eurytemora in a laboratory experiment and which became abundant for the first time in January 1988. Whether Pseudodiaptomus can replace Eurytemora as a food source for bass is still unknown.

Experiments have shown that copepods vary considerably in their vulnerability to larval bass predation.

We can expect more exotic organisms to enter the estuary as long as foreign-origin ballast water is emptied anywhere inside the Golden Gate. The effects of continued introductions is impossible to predict but the fishery leading to striped bass may already have been harmed irreparably by P. forbesi and Potamocorbula. To allow further introductions would be foolhardy.

The introduction problem is world-wide. Japanese copepods have been found in Chilean fjords. A Chinese copepod has appeared in San Diego Bay. The Great Lakes have been invaded by a fish, a crab, a cladoceran, and an alga.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) has moved to end the dumping of foreign-origin ballast water in the Great Lakes. It has asked the U.S. and Canadian Coast Guards to require ships entering the Lakes to exchange their ballast water in the open ocean. Organisms from the high seas are unlikely to survive in the fresh water of the Great Lakes. The presiding officers of the Coast Guards of both nations are sympathetic to the idea and have the necessary power to enforce such a regulation but they have said that it will require political and agency pressure to move them. To apply the necessary pressure the GLFC will bring the matter up at a meeting in June 1989 of the United Nations International Maritime Organisation.

The GLFC has also explored alternatives to ballast exchange. These are filtration of ballast water, discharge of ballast water into holding tanks for treatment, and disinfection of ballast water in the ballast tanks of ships. These alternatives will be either ineffective as in the case of filtration, or more costly and likely to result in the discharge of toxic substances to the environment in the case of the other two alternatives.

2

THE INTRODUCTION OF EXOTIC ORGANISMS INTO THE GREAT LAKES
SINCE THE LATE 1800S

prepared by

Edward L. Mills
Department of Natural Resources
Cornell Biological Field Station
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and

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CANADA

SUMMARY

North American scientists have been concerned for many decades about risks associated with introduced aquatic organisms. Such introductions to aquatic systems can have undesirable effects and pose a threat to the integrity of valued resources. The Laurentian Great Lakes have been subjected to introductions of non-native species since the time of settlement by Europeans. Recently, the Great Lakes have been invaded by three exotic species and these organisms pose a serious threat to the long-term integrity and value of the Great Lakes resource.

The first comprehensive inventory of flora and fauna introduced into the Great Lakes is currently being prepared. Establishment of such a database is presently funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission-Introductions Task Group. The goal of the Introductions Task Group is to increase our knowledge regarding Great Lakes exotic species, their introduction, their modes of entry, and prospects for prevention and control. To date, a total of 69 organisms ranging from disease pathogens to fish have been identified as non-native to the Great Lakes. Of this total, the bulk of organisms belong to three taxonomic groups, namely benthos, algae, and fish (Figure 1).

Exotic species have gained entry into the Great Lakes through a variety of vectors including waterfowl, birds, infected fish, stocking, canals, bait, and ballast water of ships. In the current survey of non-native species introductions, ballast water has been identified as the major vector through which exotic organisms have entered the Great Lakes. So far, 27 out of 69 exotic organisms have been identified as entering the Great Lakes via ballast water (Figure 2). Organisms associated with ballast water or ship hauls having the greatest impact on the Great Lakes resource include zebra mussel, sea lamprey, ruffe, and the spiny water flea. Canals also have been important vectors through which organisms have entered the Great Lakes. For example, the Erie-Barge Canal system has been an important historical route through which exotic organisms have

entered the Great Lakes. It is quite possible that the sea lamprey and the alewife entered the Great Lakes through the Erie-Barge Canal system. The white perch expanded its range into the Great Lakes from the Hudson River and the Erie-Barge Canal system. Further, the Welland Canal which connects Lakes Ontario and Erie was the primary route through which the sea lamprey expanded to the upper Great Lakes. The sea lamprey, alewife, and white perch have all had significant impacts on native Great Lakes species.

Figure 1. Number of Exotic Species Introduced Into the Great Lakes by Taxonomic Group

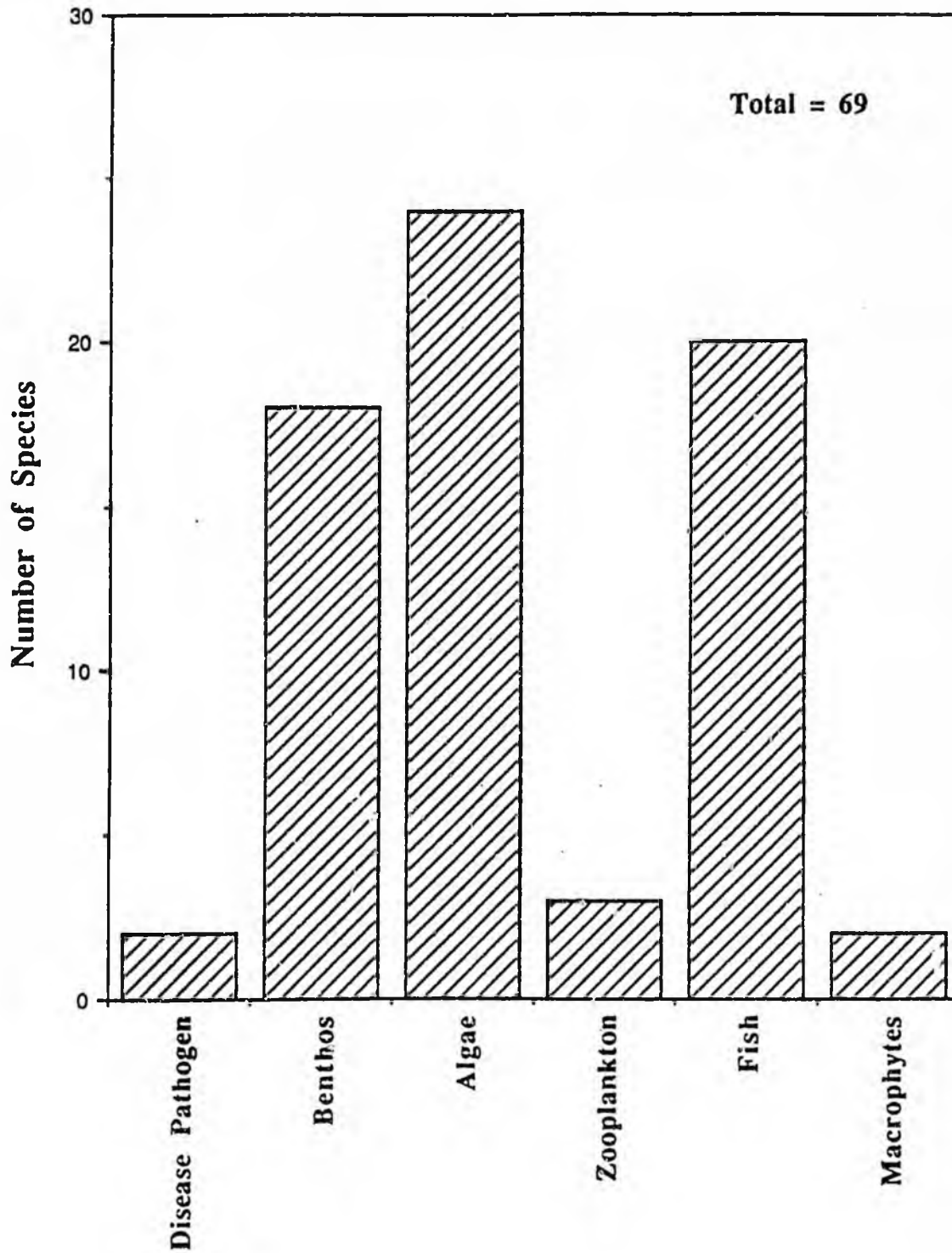
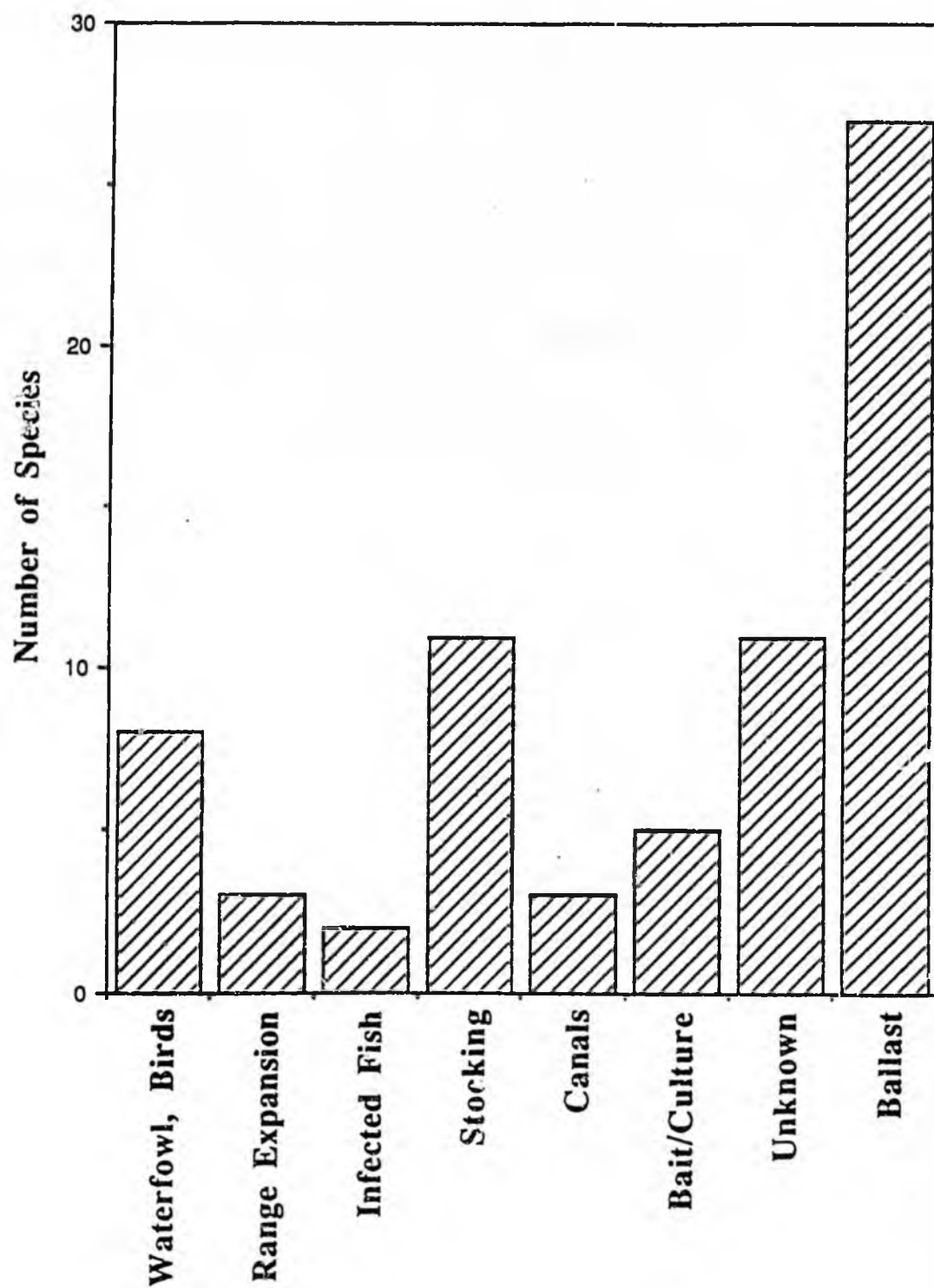
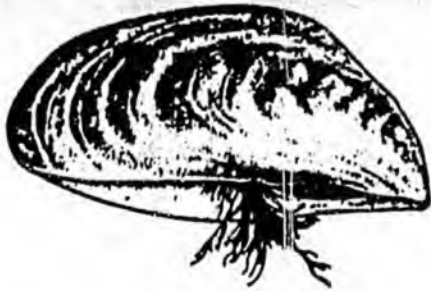


Figure 2. Entry Vectors of Exotic Species Introduced Into the Great Lakes Since the Late 1800s.





Monthly News Letter #45

February 1989

Water Resources Assessment Unit,
Southwestern Region, Ministry of the Environment

INTRODUCTION OF ZEBRA MUSSELS INTO THE GREAT LAKES:
TRUTH AND CONSEQUENCES.

Over the past two years, the predacious zooplankter "B.C." (*Bythotrephes cederstroemi*), the perch-like ruffe (*Gymnocephalus cernuus*) and the zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) have all been sighted in the Great Lakes' ecosystem. These recent immigrants join the long list of exotic species that have entered the Great Lakes probably as a result of discharges of freshwater ballast from ocean-crossing ships; a practice allowed because of the lack of Federal regulations.

While each of these recently introduced species will disturb the ecological relationships among native biota, the zebra mussel (Figure 1) will probably be the first exotic species to impart a severe cost on the users of the lakes. Using its byssal apparatus to secrete horny threads, the zebra mussel can climb and firmly attach itself to any solid surface (e.g. rocks, piers, breakwalls, pipes, boats, fishing nets, mussel shells). As a consequence, they have already restricted the inflow of water to electrical generating and water treatment facilities by reducing the diameter of intake pipes. They are expected to reduce the catch of fish by fouling impounding gear, affect sailing activities by colonizing the hulls of boats, restrict swimming activities by forming large "mussel mats" in littoral areas, interfere with beach activities because of large numbers of shells washing up along shorelines, and reduce the aesthetics of water-front areas by encrusting anything in contact with the water.

Based on the size of the shells collected (maximum length of 30mm), the zebra mussel has probably been in the Great Lakes for 2-2.5 years. The occurrence of zebra mussel shells along beaches (arrows in Figure 2) and their reported occurrence in water treatment plants (solid circles in Figure 2) indicates that they currently are found in the central and western basins of Lake Erie, the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair. Their rapid dispersal has been facilitated by their high reproductive capacity, free-swimming larval (veliger) stage, and the ability of yearlings to disperse by drifting. By 1990, the zebra mussel will probably expand its range into the eastern basin of Lake Erie and the Niagara River. However, it is not confined to Great Lakes' habitats, and will probably begin to appear in inland reservoirs, lakes and rivers in the near future, transported by waterfowl and wildlife.

Ronald W. Griffiths



Figure 1: Zebra Mussel

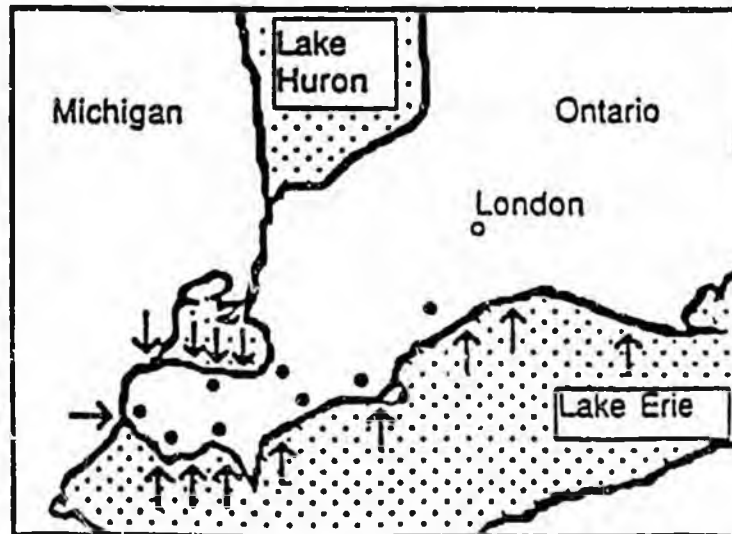


Figure 2: Occurrence of Zebra Mussels along the shoreline and in Water Treatment Plants

BALLAST WATER AND THE INVASION OF EXOTIC SPECIES
A Brief Historical Review: 1868 - 1990

James T. Carlton
Maritime Studies Program, Williams College - Mystic Seaport Museum
Mystic, Connecticut 06355

A Chronological Summary of the Some of the Events and Concerns
Relative to Ballast Water:

- 1868 Grantham (1868) describes the design of double-bottom tank systems for water ballast in iron ships
- 1880 Lloyd's Register begins in 1880 (but not before) noting types and capacities of water ballast tanks
- 1896 "Probably most cargo steamers in these days are fitted with some means of carrying water as ballast..." (Walton, 1896)
- 1900 Fulton and Grant (1900) suggest that the European shore crab Carcinus maenas was introduced to Australia by ballast water
- 1908 Ostenfeld (1908) suggests that the Asian diatom Odontella (Biddulphia) sinensis may have been introduced to the North Sea in 1903 by ballast water
- 1933 Peters describes the introduction of the mitten crab Eriocheir sinensis, sometime before 1912, from Korea or China to Germany
- 1968-
1978 Extensive literature discussions on the role of ballast water in exchanging marine organisms through the Panama Canal (reviewed by Carlton, 1985, p. 319)
- 1973 Medcof and Scribner (1975) provide first detailed report of living organisms in ballast water, based upon samples of a ship arriving from Japan to New South Wales, Australia
- 1973 "Resolution 18": "Research into the Effect of Discharge of Ballast Water Containing Bacteria of Epidemic Diseases" passed by the International Conference on Marine Pollution (including the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships)
- 1976-
1977 CSIRO (Australia) biologists sample bulk cargo carriers coming from Japan to Western Australia (see Williams et al., 1988)
- 1980 Environment Canada commissions ballast water study at Montreal, to sample 55 merchant vessels in the summer and fall; published as Bio-Environmental Services (1981)

- 1980-
1982 Ballast water investigations commence at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, based upon experimental studies using oceanographic research vessels, and upon bulk bulk cargo traffic arriving at US ports (J. T. Carlton and colleagues)
- 1985 Publication of review monograph by Carlton (1985)
- 1986 Ballast water investigations commence in Coos Bay, Oregon, at the University of Oregon Institute of Marine Biology, based upon bulk cargo vessel traffic from Japan to Pacific Northwest (J. T. Carlton and colleagues)
[Sea Grant funded, 1987-1988, 1989-1991]
- 1987 Publication of monograph on introductions of non-indigenous marine organisms by ballast water and other vectors into Australia, by Hutchings, van der Velde, and Keable (1987)
- 1987 CSIRO (Australia) scientists re-commence sampling of bulk cargo vessels inbound from Japan (Dr. G. Hallegraeff, of CSIRO Division of Fisheries, Hobart)
- 1987 Revision of Water Quality Agreement between Canada and the United States assigns responsibility (under Annex 6) for studying the ballast water issue and possible solutions to the US and Canadian Coast Guards
- 1988 Publication of paper on ballast water as a mechanism of introduction of exotic species in Australia by Williams et al. (1988).
- 1988 Great Lakes Fishery Commission meeting in Toledo, Ohio, (May) considers issue and questions of ballast water release in the Great Lakes
- 1988 "Recommendation No. 1" of the International Council for the (June) Exploration of the Sea's "Working Group on Introductions and Transfers of Marine Organisms" formulated and sent to ICES for consideration at Plenary Session in October 1988
- 1988 Canada and U.S. raise the issue of Great Lakes introductions (Sept) via ballast water at the London meeting of the Marine Environment Protection Committee of the UN's International Maritime Organization (IMO).
- 1989
March Congressmen Davis and Hertel introduce a House of Representatives bill "to direct the Secretary of Transportation to report on methods available to control the influx of exotic species into the Great Lakes"

1989 [continued]

- May Canadian Coast Guard Voluntary Guidelines on ballast water exchange go into effect in Great Lakes (compliance begins in April)
- Aug Mandatory guidelines on ballast water exchange go into effect in Australia; suspended soon thereafter
- Aug "Resolution 89-10" passed by Pacific Fisheries Legislative Task Force, "Introduced Organisms from Ballast Water", urging US Coast Guard to prohibit non-exchanged ballast water release
- Sept American Fisheries Society's Introduced Fishes Section passes Resolution at Annual Meeting (Alaska) on control of ballast water discharges
- Oct New York Congressman Nowak introduces House of Representatives Bill 3403 "to require that vessels exchange their ballast water entering the Great Lakes" [legislation pending, February 1990]
- Oct Ballast Water Monitoring Workshop, sponsored by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, at St. Catharines, Ontario
- Dec House of Representatives bill 2459 passes, calling for US Coast Guard to produce report on ballast water management strategies by June 1990 (Bill authored by Michigan Congressmen Robert Davis and Dennis Hertel)

1990

- Jan Senator F.F.Zharoff submits "Senate Joint Resolution No.59" to State of Alaska legislature "Relating to the discharge of ballast water by vessels entering the waters of Alaska" (and the organisms therein)
- Feb Voluntary guidelines on ballast water exchange go into effect in Australia (February 1)
- Feb Ballast Water Monitoring Workshop II, sponsored by the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, at Toronto, Ontario (8-9 February)
- Feb Exotic Species and the Shipping Industry Workshop, sponsored by the International Joint Commission and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, at Toronto, Ontario (28 Feb, 1-2 March)

Alaska State Legislature



Senate

2957 SHELDON JACKSON STREET
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99508

While in Juneau
P.O. BOX V
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99811
(907) 465-3818

SENATOR
ARLISS STURGULEWSKI
Senate President Pro Tempore
Chairman, Senate Rules Committee

MEMORANDUM

April 24, 1990

TO: All Senators

FROM: Senator Arliss Sturgulewski *AS*

RE: Senate Bill 59

I respectfully request your support for Senate Bill 59.

It as been conclusively demonstrated that seatbelt use results in a savings of both lives and money. Study after study shows that persons injured in automobile accidents have less severe injuries and spend far less on health care if they were using a seatbelt at the time of the accident. It has been estimated that on a national basis, each 10 percent increase in safety-belt use results in 30,000 fewer serious and moderate injuries and a savings of \$800 million in direct costs to society.

Alaskans can be healthier and safer if strongly encouraged to use safety devices in motor vehicles. This proposed law is designed to encourage compliance by rather than punishment for those who don't wear safety belts. That is the reason behind making non-compliance a secondary offense.

Attached are a number of editorials from newspapers statewide encouraging us to pass this legislation. In addition, I have attached a sectional analysis, extracts of studies, and statistical information about accident and compliance rates.

The fiscal notes received for this bill are zero.

Sectional Analysis
Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 59 (Transportation)
20 February 1990

SECTION ONE:

Repeals & reenacts AS 28.05.095, adding a new (a) requiring a person 16 years of age or older to be restrained by a safety belt in a motor vehicle if either a passenger or the driver.

Subsection (b) is current language of prior (a) with the exception of line 22, after "is" [BETWEEN FOUR AND SIX] is deleted and "is four but not yet 16" is added.

Subsection (c) is current (b), except that

(2) new exception for mail or newspaper carriers.

(3) "child" is changed to "person". Section is old (2).

(4) "child is changed to person" and "or (b)" is added after (a).
Section is old (3).

Current (4) is exemption for rural areas. The bill removes that exemption.

Subsection (d) is the old subsection (c).

Subsection (e) is new. This section provides that a peace officer may not stop a motor vehicle to determine if the passenger or driver is wearing a safety device, nor may a peace officer issue a citation unless the peace officer has stopped the motor vehicle for another reason. This section makes the violation a secondary offense.

SECTION 2:

This is a technical changes - "child" is changed to "person" and "safety belt" is added.

SECTION 3:

Subsection (a) allows the court to fine a person who is not wearing a safety belt in a motor vehicle or who removes a safety belt from a motor vehicle so as to be exempted from the requirement to wear a safety belt. The \$15 may be waived by the court if \$15 is donated to the Emergency Medical Services entity in the area where the violation occurred.

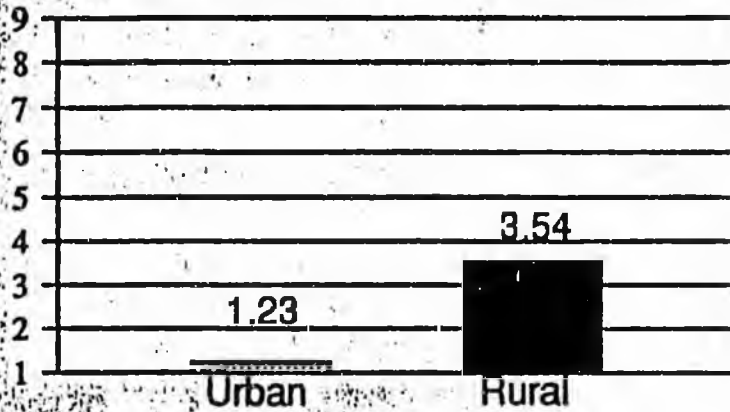
Subsection (b) adds the penalty for violating the requirement that a child be in a child safety device that was deleted from subsection (a). The state affairs committee substitute added language limiting the fine for this infraction to \$50.

SECTION 4:

This section directs the supreme court to adopt a mail-in bail procedure for payments of fines for violation of this statute.

ALASKA

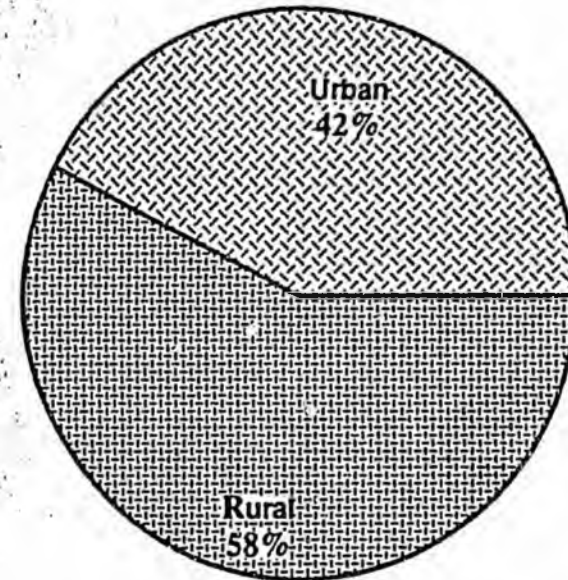
NUMBER OF DEATHS
PER 100 MILLION MILES DRIVEN



National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Statistics

NATIONALLY

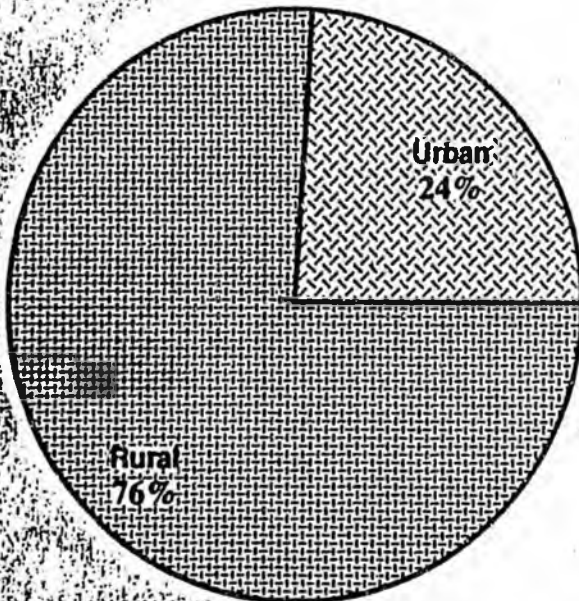
46,020 MOTOR VEHICLE
DEATHS IN 1986



National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Statistics

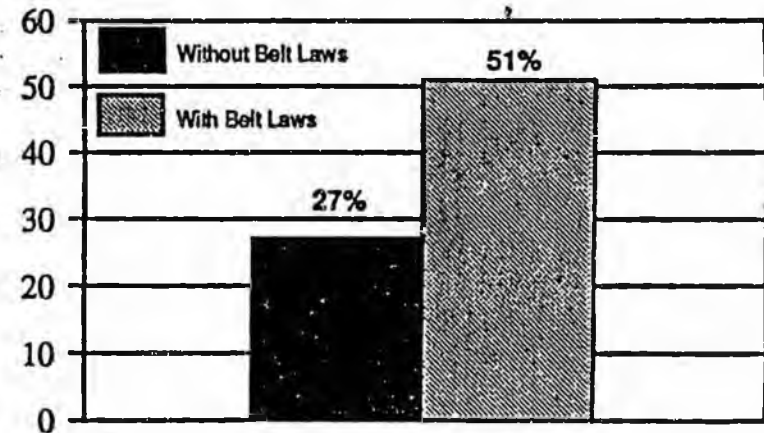
ALASKA

101 MOTOR VEHICLE
DEATHS IN 1986



National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Statistics

BELT-USE NATIONALLY



NHTSA 19 City Survey Conducted During First Half of 1987

ANCHORAGE DAILY NEWS
APRIL 9, 1990

Way overdue 4990 Kipman

Seat-belt legislation must not die this year

The arguments and counter-arguments are moldy. The debate is stale. Virtually everything that can be said about a mandatory seat-belt law has been uttered. It's time for lawmakers to vote -- and to pass a mandatory seat-belt bill.

The statistics don't lie: seat belts save lives. The 35 states (and the District of Columbia) that have approved safety belt legislation have a decrease in deaths and injuries. Seat-belt laws also are reducing the medical, legal, and other costs associated with motor accidents.

The proposed Alaska seat-belt law isn't onerous or intrusive. Law enforcement officials will issue citations only if they stop a motorist for another offense. The proposed fine of \$15 barely qualifies as a slap on the wrist. Nevertheless, this legislation establishes seat belt use as a state standard, an official expectation, which is important.

People buckle up when reminded that the law requires it. And people who buckle up live to drive again another day.

"SAFETY BELT USE" SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

APRIL 20, 1990

The list of organizational support continues to grow!!

Here is an updated listing of all resolution support groups and those issuing letters of support for the passage of a safety belt use law (SB59) in Alaska:

3M ALASKA AIR CARRIERS ASSOCIATION

AAA ALASKA

A. CLAIRE RENN, MD

ADVISORY BOARD ON DRUG ABUSE

AK ACADEMY OF PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

AK CH. AMERICAN SOCIETY OF SAFETY ENGINEERS

AK CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION

AK COUNCIL ON PREVENTION OF DRUG & ALCOHOL ABUSE, INC.

AK DENTAL SOCIETY

AK SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL

AK HEALTH EDUCATION CONSORTIUM

AK LUNG ASSOCIATION

AK NURSES ASSOCIATION

AK PEACE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

AK REGIONAL EMS COORDINATORS

AK STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOC/PORT OF VALDEZ CH

AK STATE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

AK STATE MEDICAL ASSOC. AUXILLIARY

AK TREATMENT CENTER

ALPINE ASSOCIATES

ANCHORAGE GYMNASTICS

ANCHORAGE MEDICAL & SURGICAL CLINIC

ANCHORAGE OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

ANCHORAGE SAND & GRAVEL

ARCO ALASKA/SAFETY DIVISION

AVIS RENT-A-CAR

B & C SUPPLY

BLUE CROSS OF WASHINGTON & ALASKA

CHEVRON USA

CHUCK E. CHEESE, INC.

CLINTON LILLIBRIDGE, MD

CONSOLIDATED FREIGHTWAYS

CORROON & BLACK, INC

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PHILIP W. HASELTINE
Executive Director

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

April 4, 1990

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — Extensions of Remarks

E 975

✓ SAFETY BELTS CAN SAVE LIVES
AND MONEY

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 4, 1990

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make my colleagues aware of a recent announcement by the American Coalition for Traffic Safety (ACTS) that reports on an important development on our Nation's highway system: the last half of the 1980's was the safest period on America's roads since the early 1960's. Further—and perhaps more important—the mileage death rate, the key barometer of safety progress, reached an all-time low of 2.2 fatalities per 100 million miles of vehicle travel in 1988, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

There are many reasons for this progress, but an important factor has to be the dramatic increase in safety belt use which was achieved in the mid to late 1980's through the enactment of State safety belt use laws and other activities to promote safety belt use.

In fact, NHTSA reports that from 1983 to 1988, an estimated 15,500 lives were saved by safety belts, with 10,500 of these due to belt use laws.

This is true progress, but more can and must be done to bring about greater use of safety belts so that highway fatalities can continue to be controlled. In this regard, I am pleased to see that a major campaign has been announced in my State of Michigan to encourage the business community to implement safety belt use programs for employees.

The business community has an important but sometimes unrecognized vested interest in increasing safety belt use. The Michigan Coalition for Safety Belt Use points out that automobile crashes are the leading cause of worker absenteeism and the No. 1 cause of on-the-job fatalities, and they also cost employers nationwide \$1.8 billion per year.

To generate more support for both use promotion in the business community in Michigan, the coalition is sponsoring workshops throughout the State in May and June. Gov. James Blanchard is the honorary chairman of this project. Secretary of State Richard Austin, a long-time safety belt use advocate, is the chairman. Keynote speakers at the workshops include labor and business leaders.

Mr. Speaker, I am most hopeful that this Michigan project will produce results in terms of increasing safety belt use and reducing traffic fatalities and injuries. The ACTS announcement shows the gains that have been made, but we need to do more, and the Michigan project is an example of the kind of work that can be done. I attach the following statistics for the benefit of my colleagues:

(Compiled by the Michigan Coalition for Safety Belt Use)

1. Traffic crashes rank as the number one killer of Americans ages 1-44.
2. The probability of being involved in a motor vehicle injury crash during a 75-year lifetime is higher than 86 percent.
3. For every dollar invested to encourage people to buckle up, there is a projected return of \$105.07 in economic savings. This return is more than can be gained by any other health-risk-factor intervention, such as encouraging people not to smoke.
4. Currently, 45.8 percent of front seat occupants in Michigan use their safety belts.
5. In Michigan, more than \$750 million is spent each year on medical costs due to the nonuse of safety belts.
6. An average of four people die on Michigan roadways each day due to auto crashes, while over 400 more are injured.
7. Nonuse of safety belts resulted in 548 premature deaths and the loss of 17,736 years of productive working life in Michigan during 1983.
8. In 1988, Michigan averaged 1,123 traffic crashes each day. More than 155,000 persons were injured, crippled, or maimed, and 1,704 people were killed in 1,522 fatal crashes.
9. Auto crashes are the leading cause of worker absenteeism.
10. Auto crashes cost the average employer nearly \$120,000 per employee death.
11. Serious injuries caused by auto crashes result in average medical payments of \$208,400.
12. More employees are injured or killed on the road than in the plant.



1. Report No. DOT HS 807 324		2. Government Accession No.		3. Recipient's Catalog No.	
4. Title and Subtitle Lives Saved by Seat Belts from 1983 through 1987				5. Report Date June 1988	
				6. Performing Organization Code	
				8. Performing Organization Report No.	
7. Author(s) Susan C. Partyka				10. Work Unit No. (TRAIS)	
9. Performing Organization Name and Address National Center for Statistics and Analysis 400 7th Street S.W. Washington, D.C. 20590				11. Contract or Grant No.	
				13. Type of Report and Period Covered NHTSA Technical Report 1983-1987	
12. Sponsoring Agency Name and Address Research and Development National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 400 7th Street S.W. Washington, D.C. 20590				14. Sponsoring Agency Code	
				15. Supplementary Notes	
16. Abstract Between 1983 and 1987, seat belts saved the lives of an estimated 10,938 travelers over four years old in the front seats of passenger vehicles (cars, pickups, vans, and utility vehicles). Belt use laws saved 6,907 of these lives (63 percent) by requiring seat belt use in states with belt use laws and encouraging seat belt use in states without belt use laws. Another 4,301 of the lives (37 percent) were saved by pre-law (1983) seat belt use levels.					
17. Key Words accident data, fatalities, seat belts, belt use laws			18. Distribution Statement Document is available to the public through the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Virginia 22161		
19. Security Classif. (of this report) Unclassified		20. Security Classif. (of this page) Unclassified		21. No. of Pages 17	22. Price

Example:

The Cost of Non-Use of Safety Belts in Alaska

SOURCE: Alaska Treatment Center

A 27 year old woman who **chose** to not wear her safety belt, sustained a traumatic head injury and multiple injuries in August, 1985.

Her husband, also not wearing a safety belt, **was killed** in the accident.

She has **2 small children** and is **without family support**.

The State of Alaska provided approximately **\$90,000** worth of **inpatient medical care** for this client.

Outpatient rehabilitation services over a 13-month period cost the State another **\$51,710**.

In addition to State funded medical care, this client and her children also receive services from other State funded agencies, such as the **Homemaker Program, Daycare Programs, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, Food Stamps and Child Protective Services**.

Her prognosis for returning to work is extremely poor.

She plans on remaining in the State of Alaska and will continue to require State funding.



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE
April 14, 1989

=====

201 OUT OF 231 ALASKANS KILLED IN MOTOR
VEHICLE ACCIDENTS WERE IN 1985, 1986 &
1987 WERE NOT BUCKLED UP.

- Statistics from safety experts show that half of these deaths would have been avoided if Alaska had a safety belt use law in place.
(National Highways Users Federation, 1987)
- =====

■ TWO MORE STATES PASS SAFETY BELT USE LAWS!

✓ The 32nd state to pass a safety belt use law was Wyoming in March.

✓ North Dakota became the 33rd state when their safety belt bill was signed into law on April 11, 1989.

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JUNEAU EMPIRE 5-3-89

A few minutes to save lives

In the rush to adjournment, important bills are always left in the dust. Maybe, just maybe, the safety bill won't be one of them this year. The bill, which the House passed earlier this session, has been languishing in the Senate ever since. Why has been more a matter of politics than anything else.

Legislators could not come up with a better, simpler or less expensive bill if they tried. As written, the safety belt bill says that Alaskans must wear their safety belts when in a car. If they are stopped by a police officer for another reason and are not wearing their safety belt, then

they will get a \$15 ticket.

Plain and simple.

That's all there is to it.

Some folks try to read

a lot of philosophical stuff

into this bill. They talk

about their individual rights to bounce themselves and their kids all over the road if they get into a car wreck.

This bill doesn't aim at philosophy. All it aims at is reminding Alaskans that they should wear their safety belts. If they don't and they get into an accident, the odds are vastly greater that they will be injured more seriously than if they had been wearing their belts.

¹⁹⁸⁵
¹⁹⁸⁶
^{and}
¹⁹⁸⁷ The fact is, of the 231 Alaskans who died in car wrecks in 1986 and 1987, 201 were not wearing their safety belts. If one of those lives could have been saved, this safety belt bill would have been well worth any inconvenience it may have caused.

We understand the Senate is extremely busy now, but it has had since February to pass this bill. With less than a week left in the session, it just seems to us that our senators could find a few minutes to save some lives.

ISSUE: Safety belt bill remains in state Senate

FORUM

Alaskans can live with proposed safety belt law

By FRANK BICKFORD

One thing alone can save 35 Alaskan lives a year, reduce the hardship and costs of over 600 injuries, save \$5 million worth of lost labor, and decrease economic losses associated with highway death and injury alone by

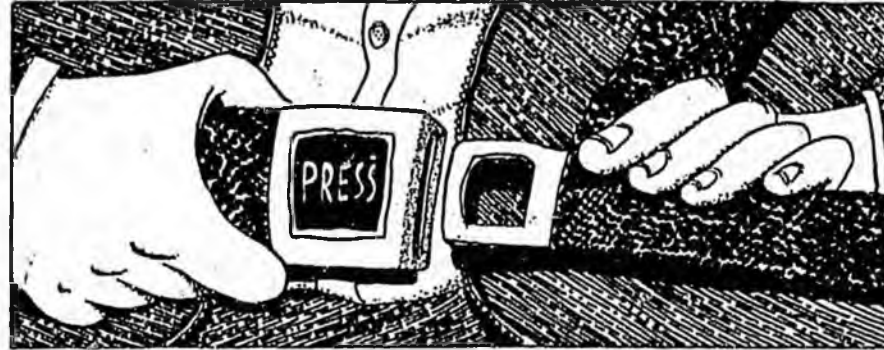


as much as \$13 million, according to estimates from The Alaska Highway Users Study. That one thing is wearing the safety belts already in our cars.

These facts are just four of the reasons Alaska needs a law requiring safety belt use. Although a major purpose of the Alaska Safety Belt Use Law would be to promote the safety of drivers and passengers using their safety belts, such a law would also promote the safety of other street and highway travelers, and promote the public welfare by reducing public expenditures.

In other words, if Alaska requires safety belts to be worn — everyone can benefit! Belt-use laws that have been passed in 31 states and D.C. motivate people to buckle up. Those states found that voluntary use is low. Legislating the use of safety belts saved significant numbers of lives and reduced costs.

Educational campaigns promoting safety belt use have been launched here and across the country. Use of safety belts increases temporarily during the campaign and then returns to a low percentage. The amount of



money spent is great and the residual impact slight.

Safety belt use laws and an aggressive educational campaign must be combined to achieve maximum use. In the absence of a law even with an educational campaign, less than 32 percent of the population will buckle up. However, a Hellenenthal statewide poll last year showed that 81 percent of Alaskans would wear safety belts if required by law.

A safety belt use law is the incentive to establish the safety habit in those who otherwise wouldn't buckle up.

If a person is killed or injured, it affects more people than the victim. Persons are not allowed a "freedom to choose" to pay the health care costs of those who "choose" not to wear their safety belts.

The cost of needless fatalities and serious injuries are paid by all persons — not simply the victim. Taxes, insurance penal-

ties and health care costs increase for us all. Unbelted occupants cause injuries to other occupants by becoming "unguided missiles." Thus, the "freedom to choose" to wear the belt does affect others directly.

The costs to society for medical care, rehabilitation, unemployment and welfare services supercede the "right" of people to seriously or fatally injure themselves or others by not buckling up. As a citizen and taxpayer, your rights are infringed upon by those who aren't responsible enough to buckle-up voluntarily; they leave you to pick up the tab for increased costs.

Other similar traffic-safety laws protect motorists and others, such as speed limits, drinking and driving and driver licensing. Safety belt use laws are consistent with these and other laws.

Ninety percent of those persons killed in motor vehicle accidents in Alaska during 1985, 1986, and 1987 were not wearing safety belts.

The proposed safety belt use law in Alaska is a secondary offense-requiring a motorist be stopped for another offense before a \$15 ticket (which may be donated to emergency medical services) can be issued for not using safety belts.

Secondary enforcement will not impose additional burdens on law enforcement officers responsible for citing motorists under this act. Safety belts reduce traffic fatalities, which are eight times as expensive to investigate as non-injury accidents. In fact, officers would have more time to concentrate on other traffic enforcement programs.

In the past three years Hellenenthal Associates has conducted extensive statewide and local polls that show more than 80 percent of Alaskans supporting a safety belt use law.

In the past three years more than 80,000 Alaskans have signed letters of support for the proposed safety belt use law and over 100 businesses have passed supportive resolutions.

The Alaska State House in 1987 passed the safety belt use law with bipartisan support. The Senate in 1988 failed to act on the legislation but 1989 looks more favorable for passage. Supporters of the bill include Speaker of the House, Sam Cottrell; Senate President Tim Kelly, and the Governor Steve Cowper.

The statistics, the public support, and editorial support of many newspapers and legislative support show that the proposed safety belt use law is one that Alaskans can live with.

□ Frank Bickford is executive director of the Alaska Safety Belt Use Coalition.

Anchorage Daily News



Winner, 1976 Pulitzer Prize Gold Medal for Public Service

Gerald F. Grilly Publisher
Howard Weaver Managing Editor
Michael Carey Editorial Page Editor

Katherine Fenning, Editor and Publisher 1971 to 1983
Lawrence Fenning, Editor and Publisher 1967 to 1971

Founded in 1946 by Norman C. Brown

A way to prevent needless deaths

This year, the legislature has a chance to help fight one of the most serious health problems in the state — and it can do so with very little money or effort.

The health problem is accidental injuries. They are the second leading cause of death for all Alaskans — and the leading cause among young Alaskans. Too many of these deaths come in motor vehicle accidents — some 231 over the past three years.

There's a simple way to cut this carnage on the state's highways: Require people to wear seat belts. Of those 231 victims, 201 were not belted in.

A bill to mandate seat belt use passed the state House last year but never made it to the Senate floor for a vote. This year, with new legislative leadership, prospects for a seat belt law look much better.

In the past, some people have resisted a seat belt law because they see it as an infringement on their personal freedom. Why they object is a mystery. The resulting "intrusion" into people's lives is on a par with a parking ticket — and has considerably more justification. When a parked car overstays its welcome, there's just one less parking space available. When car passengers fail to buckle up, they invite serious injury and death, and increase the costs we all pay for emergency services, insurance and health care.

Alaska's proposed seat belt law offers us all a gentle reminder to do what's good for everyone. The violation would be a secondary offense, meaning that drivers cannot be cited unless they are stopped for some other violation. The fine would be a mere \$15. If violators don't want to send their checks to the government, they can donate the \$15 to emergency medical services.

Seat belts save lives — but only if people wear them. A mandatory seat belt law is a reasonable way to get more people to buckle up.



Tuesday, January 17, 1989

Make it mandatory

The Legislature could do a simple thing that would save lives, reduce injuries and save money. It could pass a law making the use of safety belts in vehicles mandatory.

Many people don't like the idea of mandatory safety belt laws. The use of safety belts should be a personal choice, they say. The government has no business dictating personal choices.

It's a compelling argument, but not so compelling as the harm that is done by not wearing safety belts. According to a 1987 study, mandatory use of safety belts in Alaska would save 35 lives a year, reduce injuries to more than 600 persons, save \$5 million worth of lost labor and decrease other economic losses associated with highway death and injury by \$13 million. Not just the victims, but everyone pays the cost of not wearing safety belts in terms of increased taxes, insurance premiums and health care costs.

Thirty-one states and the District of Columbia have passed mandatory safety belt laws. In every state, use of safety belts has increased substantially.

Educational programs promoting safety belt use fail to provide the incentive to buckle up that a law requiring it does. We reluctantly move from a position of advocating voluntary compliances to urging the Legislature to make safety belts mandatory. They should, however, avoid some of the problems that Washington state encountered when they initially failed to provide for exemptions for certain types of delivery vehicles.

FAIRBANKS

Daily News - Miner

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President and Publisher

Elaine Atwood
Assistant Publisher

William J. Tobin
Vice-President, Editor-in-Chief

Editorials

You buckle up in Canada

IN THE for-what-it's-worth department, all the provinces of Canada now have laws making mandatory the use of seat belts by motorists.

Prince Edward Island was the last to join the national movement, putting its mandatory seat belt law into effect this past January.

British Columbia was an early member of the buckle-up brigade, enacting its mandatory law in October 1977. Alberta, among the Western provinces, joined the flock last July.

The reason, of course, is that seat belts save lives — even though their use is a habit that many motorists find hard to adopt.

Arguments that it infringes on personal rights to make it illegal to drive without seat belts are no more valid than saying that requiring a motorist to have a driver's license is an attack on one's liberties.

A bill to make it illegal to

drive in Alaska without seat belts snapped into place was killed in the last legislative session. It died in committee, despite indications that it would have passed given the chance to reach the floor.

ONCE AGAIN, the argument was that it's none of the state's business whether a person buckles up — and that without the requirement, independent Alaskans will do what's right and they don't need the state telling them what to do.

The same Alaskans, however, apparently have no reluctance to fasten their seat belts when they board an airplane — something that also is mandated by the long arm of the law.

And the fact remains that there is more danger of a fatal accident on the highway than there is in the air.

So what's the problem, anyway?

Robert B. Atwood
President and Publisher

Elaine Atwood
Assistant Publisher

William J. Tobin
Vice-President, Editor-in-Chief

Editorials

The Anchorage Times

May 3, 1988

Buckle up, and do it now

IN THESE closing days of the lawmaking session, it would be good if the ladies and gentlemen of the legislature would quit fiddling around with lives and buckle up — and make the rest of us do it, too.

None of us complain about wearing seat belts when in airplanes. We're required to do it there.

So what's the big deal about requiring us to do the same when we drive around town or on the highway?

More people are killed on the roads than in airplane crashes. And a lot of those who are weren't wearing safety belts.

For three years now the legislature has had before it bills to make it illegal for drivers and passengers to ride without safety belts fashioned. Each year the effort has died on the sword of individual rights and argu-

ments that the state shouldn't legislate against the risks a person is willing to take with his or her own life.

Baloney.

SEAT BELTS save lives when properly used. It's as simple as that.

And no big felony charge would be involved for those who don't, under this proposed legislation.

All that would be involved is a \$15 fine for offenders.

And even that can be donated to a good cause. At the option of the guilty driver, the fine would go to emergency medical service units — the ambulance drivers and crews who speed to the scene and try to keep alive those injured in accidents.

Enough talk is enough. Pass it and let's get on with adopting a simple new habit.

Anchorage Daily News



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Founded in 1946 by Norman C. Brown

A reasonable request

Have you ever stopped to think what happens in a high-speed car accident when you're not wearing a seat belt?

As the impact propels you from your seat, the first thing you hit is the steering wheel. As it crushes your chest, ribs break, tissue rips, and blood seeps inside your body. Next the windshield delivers a knockout blow to your head. The shattering glass slices your scalp and body as you are thrown from the car.

That grim scenario ought to be enough to persuade every automobile passenger to use seat belts. Unfortunately, it's not.

If the harm from not wearing seat belts were limited to the individual victim, wearing one might be strictly a personal decision. But the consequences of that choice inflict a toll on society too. Fellow citizens help pay the bills through higher costs for health care, insurance, and emergency services.

Given those costs, a coalition of health groups and safety-conscious citizens have proposed a bill to make seat belt use mandatory in Alaska. It's hardly a draconian measure. Passengers could be cited only if the car were stopped for other violations. The fine is a mere \$15, which could be donated to emergency medical services.

But the bill, which has already passed the House, is locked in the crypt known as the Senate State Affairs Committee. The bill is a prisoner of those who say Alaskans have the right to ruin their lives without state interference.

It's true the measure can be considered paternalistic, because it tries to force Alaskans to do what's good for them. But driving public roads is a privilege, not some sacred individual right. A mandatory seat belt law is a reasonable way for the state to make its highways safer and cut the cost of not-so-inevitable bloodshed.

JUNEAU EMPIRE

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5-4-88

Seatbelt bill should be passed

Lodged within the bowels of the Alaska Legislature is a bill that, plain and simple, would save lives. It is the seatbelt bill.

Opponents say any law requiring Alaskans to buckle their seatbelt is an infringement on their "civil liberties." They say that if they want to increase the likelihood of being injured or killed in an automobile accident by 15 to 25 percent, then that's their business.

Wrong. In fact, all of us pay the price of those individuals who cherish their "civil liberties" more than their lives. According to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Jim Burnley, seatbelt laws save more than the human suffering a serious traffic accident leaves in its wake.

"Belt laws are helping to reduce the staggering societal costs of motor vehicle crashes, currently estimated to be \$74 billion a year," he wrote in USA Today. That includes medical, municipal and state services, increased insurance expenses and other public expenditures.

The cost of not having a seatbelt law can be estimated in blood, too. If all 50 states had seatbelt laws, Secretary Burnley estimates 3,100 lives would have been saved last year alone. That is more than the population of Wrangell killed because of the lack of seatbelt laws.

What is this "threat" to our "civil liberties" that the Alaska Senate is protecting us from? The bill now bottled up in the Senate State Affairs Committee would make driving without wearing a seatbelt an secondary offense. That means you could not be stopped by a police officer solely for not wearing a seatbelt. But if you were stopped for another traffic offense and didn't have your seatbelt fastened, you would have to pay a \$15 fine or donate that amount to emergency medical services.

Pardon us, but that is hardly an infringement on anyone's civil liberties. All it would do is heighten public awareness of the need to wear seatbelts.

Thirty-two states and Washington, D.C., have seatbelt laws. Obviously, those lawmakers know that any law that saves so many lives makes good sense.

Hopefully, Alaska's lawmakers would agree - if they ever got a chance to vote on the bill.

What happens if Alaska's legislators don't pass a seatbelt law this year? More people will die, more people will be injured, and the next legislature will have to do what this one refused to.

Pass a seatbelt law.
Please.

ISSUE: Should
Alaska have a seat-
belt use law?

The Case for Safety Belt Use

*Flaw in law KJ education
mpat + Physician*

Safety belts have been required equipment for automobiles in the United States for 20 years. But it has been only recently that Americans have made extensive use of these effective devices. As recently as 1982, only 11% of American motorists were "buckling up." Today, 31 states and the District of Columbia have safety belt use laws on the books, and overall belt use is estimated to be at an all-time high of 46%.

See also pp 3593 and 3598.

The primary reason for this turnabout has been a refocusing of highway safety efforts, to concentrate more on drivers themselves rather than just on regulating manufacturers. Former Secretary of Transportation Elizabeth Dole settled a 15-year-long battle over air bags in 1984. Her solution: if states representing more than two thirds of the population enacted safety belt laws, manufacturers would not be required to install air bags or automatic safety belts. The auto industry has since lobbied intensively for safety belt laws in the state legislatures. The Department of Transportation and other groups, such as Traffic Safety Now and the American Coalition for Traffic Safety, have also waged a large-scale public information campaign promoting safety belt use.

The results are clear. Increased safety belt use has saved an estimated 11 000 lives since 1984, and tens of thousands of serious injuries have been prevented. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that front-seat lap-shoulder belts are highly effective in protecting occupants in a crash, reducing the risk of death by 40% to 50% and the risk of moderate to serious injury by 45% to 55%.¹ These estimates were based on extensive data on crash and injury experience over the past decade.

Physicians and other professionals in the medical and public health fields can also play a key role in increasing safety belt usage. According to national health statistics, not only are motor vehicle crashes the leading cause of death among 5- to 34-year-olds, they account for the greatest number of productive years of life lost and are the most costly source of disability in the United States. Yet, a survey² of 209 Texas family physicians revealed that only 5% said they routinely ask their patients about safety belts. Fifty-eight percent neither advise nor discuss the risk, even when they are aware of nonuse. These physicians ranked nonuse of safety belts as less of a risk factor than smoking, obesity, excessive use of alcohol, high blood pressure, stress, lack of exercise, and a high-fat diet.

However, the American Academy of Family Physicians plans to introduce a continuing medical education course for physicians next year on how motor vehicle trauma can be reduced through patient education on the importance of using safety belts, child safety seats, and the extra protection provided by air bags. There is no doubt that increased safety belt education, especially among school-age children, will prove beneficial. Recent observations of 242 school-age children at a pediatric clinic dramatically demonstrated the influence of a physician's message to his or her young patients and parents on the importance of using safety belts.³ It was found that 38% of the young patients who received counseling were then observed wearing their belts, compared with 5% of those who

did not receive counseling.

Much more remains to be done to increase safety belt use across the country. Currently, surveys indicate that belt use in states with belt laws averages about 50%, but also varies widely from state to state, from 68% in Hawaii to only 27% in Tennessee.⁴ The most dramatic, sustained increases in safety belt use appear to have been in those communities where there is a combination of intensive law enforcement and public information and education. Not surprisingly, belt use is generally lower in states without belt laws, but those states also show substantial variance. And we know that many countries have attained very high safety belt use rates—such as 80% in Australia and parts of Canada and 95% in Great Britain and West Germany. We are therefore convinced that there are great opportunities for further increases in belt use all across America.

Our goal at the Department of Transportation and the goal of a wide spectrum of safety groups across America is to attain a national safety belt usage rate of 70% by 1990.

There has never been any question that safety belts and child safety seats are extremely effective in saving lives and reducing injuries. The problem has been convincing motorists to use them every time they get into their cars and trucks. When the National Transportation Safety Board reported in a 1986 study⁵ that use of rear-seat lap belts could cause injury in some crashes, some people mistakenly assumed that they were safer not wearing a belt at all. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our crash data conclusively show that lap-only safety belts are quite effective in reducing the risk of death and injury to occupants compared with wearing no belt at all. Furthermore, car manufacturers are now voluntarily taking the initiative to improve protection for rear-seat occupants even further by installing lap-shoulder belts as standard equipment in virtually all new cars by 1990.

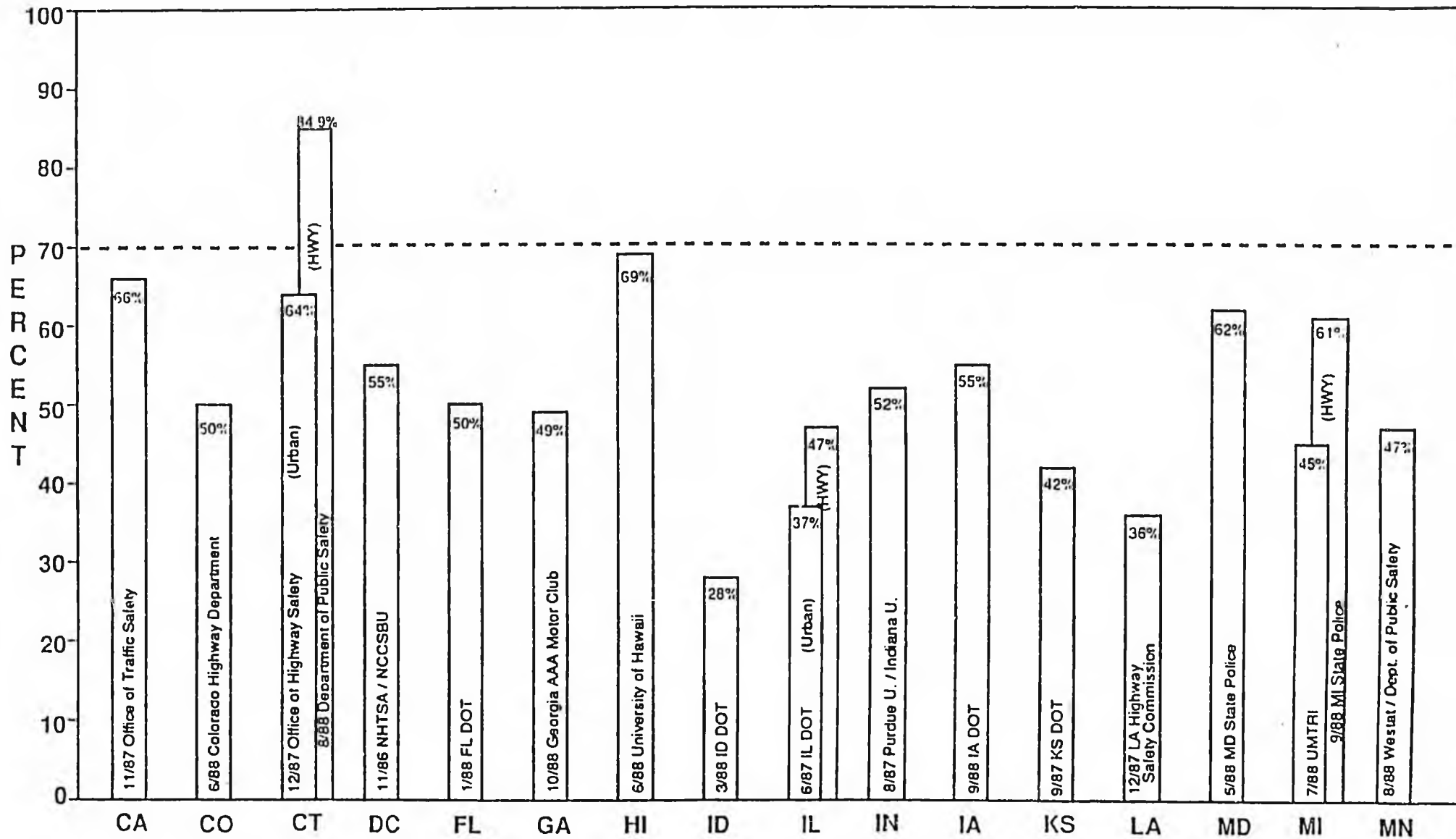
The outlook on safety belt use is encouraging. More and more Americans are buckling up for safety, and each year more lives are being saved on our highways. But more than half of America's motorists are still unprotected. There is still much work for all of us—in government, in the private sector, and for health professionals—in spreading the important life-saving message of safety belt use.

As administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, I urge physicians and major health care providers, as part of their daily routine, to advise patients about the importance of safety belts and the use of child safety seats to prevent injuries from motor vehicle crashes.

Diane Steed
National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration
Washington, DC

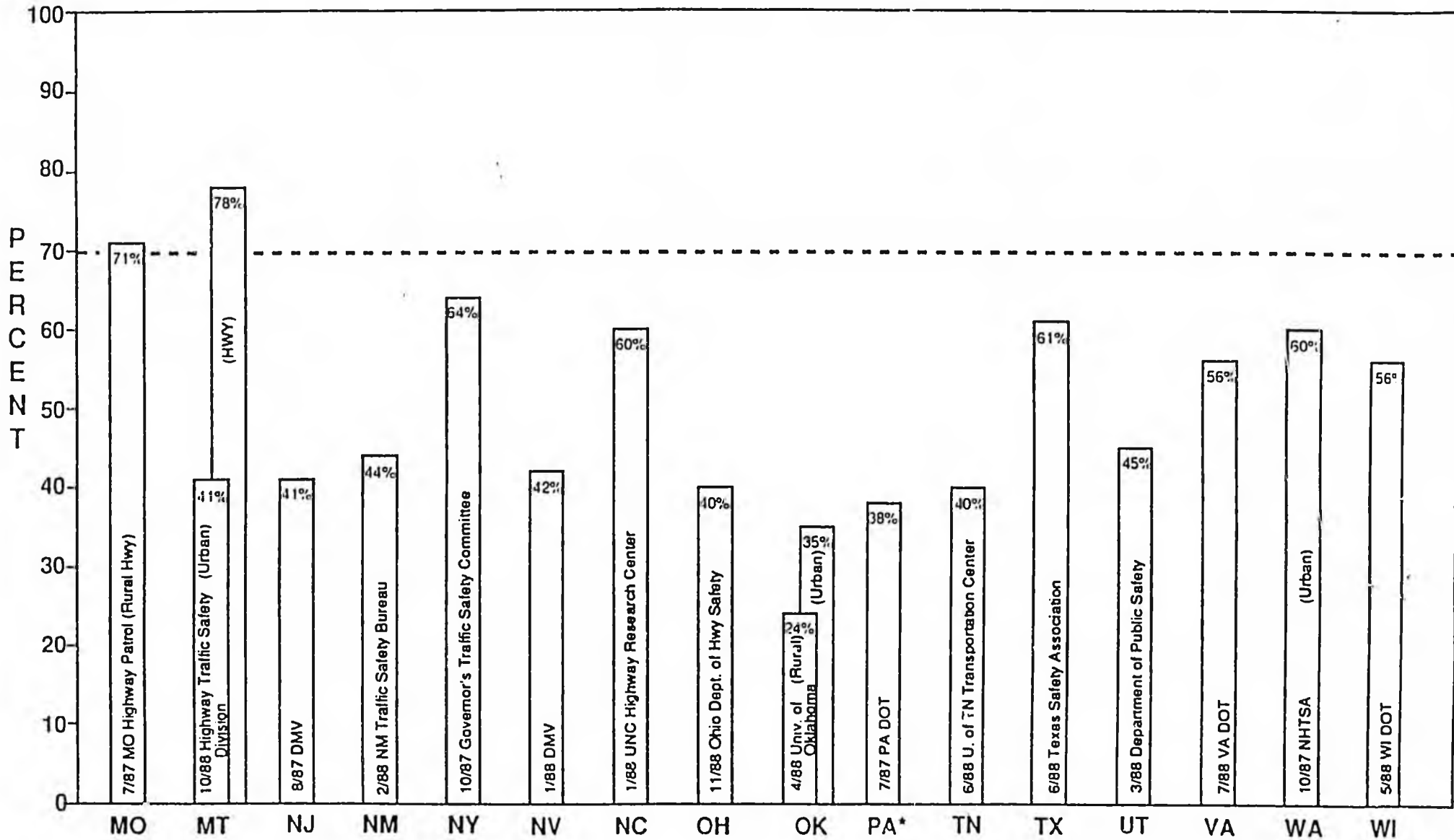
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COMPLIANCE RATES IN POST-LAW STATES



COMPLIANCE RATES IN POST-LAW STATES

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* Use rates prior to law taking effect

FACT SHEET:

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

"Effects Of Mandatory Safety Belt Use On Hospital Admissions"

August 1988

This study assessed the effects of Michigan's safety-belt-use law on more than 8,000 motor-vehicle injuries which resulted in hospitalizations at 14 area hospitals.

It was conducted by the University of Michigan School of Public Health from data collected through the Michigan Inpatient Database from January 1980 through October 1986. Major findings of this study include:

- The Michigan safety-belt-use law passed in July 1985 has resulted in a 19-percent reduction in hospitalizations due to automobile accidents.
- There were 20 percent fewer injuries to body extremities following the passage of Michigan's belt-use law.
- Hospitalizations lasting more than one week decreased nearly 25 percent after the law went into effect.
- After the state safety-belt-use law went into effect, minorities experienced 22 percent fewer injuries.
- A 32-percent decline in injuries occurred among patients using public-health insurance after passage of the state law.
- With regard to the contention that safety belts may cause injuries, researchers concluded "the benefits of restraints far exceed the risks associated with them."

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