

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 1997 RECONVENED SESSION

CHAPTER 793

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 46.2-1094 and 46.2-1095 of the Code of Virginia, relating to seat belts for children between the ages of four and sixteen; penalty.

[S 971]

Approved April 2, 1997

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 46.2-1094 and 46.2-1095 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 46.2-1094. Occupants of front seats of motor vehicles required to use safety lap belts and shoulder harnesses; penalty.

A. Each person at least sixteen years of age and occupying the front seat of a motor vehicle equipped or required by the provisions of this title to be equipped with a safety belt system, consisting of lap belts, shoulder harnesses, combinations thereof or similar devices, shall wear the appropriate safety belt system at all times while the motor vehicle is in motion on any public highway. A child under the age of ~~four~~ sixteen years, however, shall be protected as required by the provisions of this chapter.

~~B. Each driver of a motor vehicle equipped or required by the provisions of this title to be equipped with a safety belt system who is transporting a child at least four years of age, but less than sixteen years of age, in the front seat of such motor vehicle shall cause such child to wear the appropriate safety belt system.~~

~~C. B.~~ This section shall not apply to:

1. Any person for whom a licensed physician determines that the use of such safety belt system would be impractical by reason of such person's physical condition or other medical reason, provided the person so exempted carries on his person or in the vehicle a signed written statement of the physician identifying the exempted person and stating the grounds for the exemption; or

2. Any law-enforcement officer transporting persons in custody or traveling in circumstances which render the wearing of such safety belt system impractical; or

3. Any person while driving a motor vehicle and performing the duties of a rural mail carrier for the United States Postal Service; or

4. Any person driving a motor vehicle and performing the duties of a rural newspaper route carrier, newspaper bundle hauler or newspaper rack carrier; or

5. Drivers of taxicabs; or

6. Personnel of commercial or municipal vehicles while actually engaged in the collection or delivery of goods or services, including but not limited to solid waste, where such collection or delivery requires the personnel to exit and enter the cab of the vehicle with such frequency and regularity so as to render the use of safety belt systems impractical and the safety benefits derived therefrom insignificant. Such personnel shall resume the use of safety belt systems when actual collection or delivery has ceased or when the vehicle is in transit to or from a point of final disposition or disposal, including but not limited to solid waste facilities, terminals, or other location where the vehicle may be principally garaged; or

7. Any person driving a motor vehicle and performing the duties of a utility meter reader; or

8. Law-enforcement agency personnel driving motor vehicles to enforce laws governing motor vehicle parking.

~~D. C.~~ Any person who violates this section shall be subject to a civil penalty of twenty-five dollars to be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Literary Fund. No assignment of demerit points shall be made under Article 19 of Chapter 3 (§ 46.2-489 et seq.) of this title and no court costs shall be assessed for violations of this section.

~~E. D.~~ A violation of this section shall not constitute negligence, be considered in mitigation of damages of whatever nature, be admissible in evidence or be the subject of comment by counsel in any action for the recovery of damages arising out of the operation, ownership, or maintenance of a motor vehicle, nor shall anything in this section change any existing law, rule, or procedure pertaining to any such civil action.

~~F. E.~~ A violation of this section may be charged on the uniform traffic summons form.

~~G. F.~~ No citation for a violation of this section shall be issued unless the officer issuing such citation has cause to stop or arrest the driver of such motor vehicle for the violation of some other provision of this Code or local ordinance relating to the operation, ownership, or maintenance of a motor vehicle or any criminal statute.

~~H. G.~~ The governing body of any city having a population of at least 66,000 but no more than 67,000 may adopt an ordinance not inconsistent with the provisions of this section, requiring the use of

safety belt systems. The penalty for violating any such ordinance shall not exceed a fine or civil penalty of twenty-five dollars.

§ 46.2-1095. Child restraint devices required; safety belts for children four to sixteen required; penalty.

A. Any person who drives on the highways of Virginia any motor vehicle manufactured after January 1, 1968, shall ensure that any child under the age of four ~~(i) of which he is the parent or legal guardian or (ii) which whom he regularly~~ transports therein is provided with and properly secured in a child restraint device of a type which meets the standards adopted by the United States Department of Transportation.

B. Any person transporting any child at least four years of age, but less than sixteen years of age, shall ensure that such child is provided with and properly secured by an appropriate safety belt system when driving on the highways of Virginia in any motor vehicle manufactured after January 1, 1968, equipped or required by the provisions of this title to be equipped with a safety belt system, consisting of lap belts, shoulder harnesses, combinations thereof or similar devices.

C. A violation of this section shall not constitute negligence, be considered in mitigation of damages of whatever nature, be admissible in evidence or be the subject of comment by counsel in any action for the recovery of damages in a civil action.

D. Any person who violates subsection B of this section shall be subject to a civil penalty of twenty-five dollars to be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Child Restraint Device Special Fund pursuant to § 46.2-1097. No assignment of demerit points shall be made under Article 19 (§ 46.2-489 et seq.) of Chapter 3 of this title and no court costs shall be assessed for violations of this section.

E. A violation of this section may be charged on the uniform traffic summons form.

F. Nothing in this section shall apply to taxicabs, school buses, executive sedans, limousines, or the rear cargo area of pickup trucks or other vehicles.