

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- 2016 SESSION

CHAPTER 637

An Act to amend and reenact § 46.2-844 of the Code of Virginia, relating to passing stopped school buses; mailing of summons; rebutting presumption.

[S 120]

Approved April 1, 2016

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 46.2-844 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 46.2-844. Passing stopped school buses; penalty; prima facie evidence.

A. The driver of a motor vehicle approaching from any direction a clearly marked school bus ~~which~~ *that* is stopped on any highway, private road, or school driveway for the purpose of taking on or discharging children, the elderly, or mentally or physically handicapped persons, who, in violation of § 46.2-859, fails to stop and remain stopped until all such persons are clear of the highway, private road, or school driveway, is subject to a civil penalty of \$250, and any prosecution shall be instituted and conducted in the same manner as prosecutions for traffic infractions.

A prosecution or proceeding under § 46.2-859 is a bar to a prosecution or proceeding under this section for the same act, and a prosecution or proceeding under this section is a bar to a prosecution or proceeding under § 46.2-859 for the same act.

In any prosecution for which a summons charging a violation of this section was issued within ~~ten~~ *10* days of the alleged violation, proof that the motor vehicle described in the summons was operated in violation of this section, together with proof that the defendant was at the time of such violation the registered owner of the vehicle, as required by Chapter 6 (§ 46.2-600 et seq.) ~~of this title~~ shall give rise to a rebuttable presumption that the registered owner of the vehicle was the person who operated the vehicle at the place where, and for the time during which, the violation occurred. *Such presumption shall be rebutted if (i) the owner of the vehicle files an affidavit by regular mail with the clerk of the general district court that he was not the operator of the vehicle at the time of the alleged violation, (ii) the owner testifies in open court under oath that he was not the operator of the vehicle at the time of the alleged violation, or (iii) a certified copy of a police report showing that the vehicle had been reported to the police as stolen prior to the time of the alleged violation of this section is presented prior to the return date established on the summons issued pursuant to this section to the court adjudicating the alleged violation. Nothing herein shall limit the admission of otherwise admissible evidence.*

The testimony of the school bus driver, the supervisor of school buses, or a law-enforcement officer that the vehicle was yellow, conspicuously marked as a school bus, and equipped with warning devices as prescribed in § 46.2-1090 is prima facie evidence that the vehicle is a school bus.

B. A locality may, by ordinance, authorize the school division of the locality to install and operate a video-monitoring system in or on the school buses operated by the division or to contract with a private vendor to do so on behalf of the school division for the purpose of recording violations of subsection A. Such ordinance may direct that any civil penalty levied for a violation of subsection A shall be payable to the local school division. *In any locality that has adopted such an ordinance, a summons for a violation of subsection A may be executed as provided in § 19.2-76.2 and, notwithstanding the provisions of § 19.2-76, the summons may be executed by mailing by first-class mail a copy thereof to the address of the owner of the vehicle contained in the records of the Department. Every such mailing shall include, in addition to the summons, a notice of (i) the summoned person's ability to rebut the presumption that he was the operator of the vehicle at the time of the alleged violation through the filing of an affidavit as provided in subsection A and (ii) instructions for filing such an affidavit, including the address to which the affidavit is to be sent. If the summoned person fails to appear on the date of return set out in the summons mailed pursuant to this section, the summons shall be executed in the manner set out in § 19.2-76.3. No proceedings for contempt or arrest of a person summoned by mailing shall be instituted for failure to appear on the return date of the summons. Any summons executed for violation of this section shall provide to the person summoned at least 30 business days from the mailing of the summons to inspect information collected by a video-monitoring system in connection with the violation.*

For purposes of this subsection, "video-monitoring system" means a system with one or more camera sensors and computers installed and operated on a school bus that produces live digital and recorded video of motor vehicles being operated in violation of § 46.2-859. All such systems installed shall, at a minimum, produce a recorded image of the license plate and shall record the activation status of at least one warning device as prescribed in § 46.2-1090 and the time, date, and location of the vehicle when the image is recorded.