

ALPHA Resolution 2004-2

Recommending the Alaska Legislature Approve A Primary Seatbelt Law

Whereas a primary enforcement allows a law enforcement officer to stop a vehicle and issue a citation when the officer observes an unbelted driver or passenger,

Recalling that it has been 13 years since a (secondary) seatbelt law has been introduced where enforcement can only be written after the officer stops the vehicle or cites the offender for another infraction;

Whereas 21 states and DC (July, 2004) have passed a primary seatbelt law; (National Highway Safety Association, 2004);

Recognizing that motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury death to people between the ages of 10-34 years of age (Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics, 2002);

Whereas 84% of people who wear seatbelts are more likely to walk away uninjured compared with only 60% of the unbelted occupants (DOT Alaska Accident Report, 2001);

Whereas \$12 million, 71 major injuries prevented, and 6 lives saved in Alaska per year if a primary seatbelt was passed (BELTUSE software program, NHSTA);

Whereas studies show that patients who were not buckled up at the time of a motor vehicle crash were almost twice as likely to sustain a serious head injury and over one and half times more likely to be discharged with a permanent disability (Alaska Trauma Registry, 1991-2000 10 year data report);

Whereas 50% of the medical costs for people unrestrained at the time of the crash was paid by public funds ("Alaska Seatbelt Analysis", Sept. 2003, Alaska Injury Prevention Center);

Whereas a primary seatbelt law would increase seatbelt use by 11 points, from 71%-92%; NHSTA, spring, 2004);

Whereas a recent study reported that a primary law does not lead to an increase of police harassment; (Accident Analysis & Prevention, 36 (2004) 819-828;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association urge the Alaska Legislature and Governor Murkowski to introduce and pass legislation that amends the secondary seatbelt enforcement to a primary enforcement law.

Statement of Desired Outcomes: Adoption of primary seat belt law by the legislature.

Fiscal Impact: Activities ALPHA could undertake at no additional cost:

1. Invite members to testify and write letters of support to the legislature.
2. Testify at public hearings on the public health benefits of seat belt use.
3. Distribute on its website and to its members information in support of a primary seat belt law, using public health injury surveillance data.