

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1610
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Transportation & Homeland Security
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In 2007, the legislature passed H.B. 323, requiring the installation of three-point, lap shoulder seat belts on all new school buses purchased on or after September 1, 2010. The law would be effective only if the legislature appropriated state funds to reimburse school districts for expenses incurred in complying with the law. In 2009, the legislature created the Texas School Seat Belt Program, appropriating \$10 million to reimburse school districts for the expense of installing the seat belts. An additional \$400,000 was allocated for the Texas Transportation Institute to develop a priority implementation plan maximizing student safety and cost by determining the most dangerous bus routes in Texas. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) was tasked with administering the reimbursement plan.

Section 547.701(f) (relating to additional equipment requirements for school buses and other buses used to transport schoolchildren), Transportation Code, was added in 2009 to reassert that this is a state-funded reimbursement program. However, rather than clarifying intent, this section has been a source of confusion to school districts and TEA. S.B. 1610 clarifies and simplifies this reimbursement provision by returning to the original language that passed the legislature in 2007. Simply, S.B. 1610 states that school districts are required to comply with the seat belt provisions only to the extent that the legislature has appropriated money for the purpose of reimbursing school districts for expenses incurred in complying with the Act.

S.B. 1610 amends current law relating to seat belt requirements for certain vehicles.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 547.701(f), Transportation Code, as follows:

(f) Requires a school district to comply with Subsection (e) (relating to requiring that a bus operated by or contracted for use by a school district for the transportation of schoolchildren be equipped with a three-point seat belt for each passenger, including the operator) only to the extent that the legislature has appropriated money for the purpose of reimbursing school districts for expenses incurred in complying with Subsection (e). Deletes existing text requiring a school district to comply with Subsection (e) only to the extent that the Texas Education Agency (TEA) pays or commits to pay the district for expenses incurred in complying with that subsection and authorizing TEA to make grants of appropriated money for the purpose of paying school districts under this subsection.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2011.