

SUBJECT: Requiring driving safety courses

COMMITTEE: Public Safety — favorable, with amendments

VOTE: 7 ayes — Oakley, Driver, Carter, Keel, Madden, McClendon, E. Reyna

1 nay — Olivo

1 absent—Keffer

WITNESSES: For — Robert A. Draper, National Safety Council; Lew McNeil

Against — None

BACKGROUND : Texas drivers must renew their license every four years. Drivers with no violations on record may renew licenses by mail; drivers with a moving traffic violation or serious traffic offense on record during that four-year period must renew their licenses in person.

The Transportation Code defines a habitual violator as someone with four or more moving violation convictions from different transactions in 12 consecutive months or seven or more convictions in 24 months.

Courts may dismiss certain moving violations if the defendant successfully completes an approved driving safety course and pays a fee to cover court costs.

DIGEST: HB 2095 as amended, would require that habitual violators have successfully completed an approved driving safety course within the preceding 12 months in order to renew their driver's license.

The bill also would require that courts order anyone convicted of driving at a speed greater than 90 miles an hour to successfully complete a driver safety course in addition to any other penalty imposed.

Courts dismissing moving violations for successful completion of a driving safety course would have to report the names and license numbers of the

persons involved to the Department of Public Safety. Courts could require these persons to pay an additional fee to cover the cost of making the report.

HB 2095 would take effect September 1, 1997.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 2095, as amended, would result in more knowledgeable drivers and safer roads by requiring safe driving courses of the worst offenders — habitual violators and serious speeders. Requiring certain traffic violators to take safe driving courses is an established state policy designed to discourage reckless behavior and make drivers think about their driving behavior. HB 2095 would properly extend this policy. Driving on Texas roadways is a privilege, not a right, and the state has an obligation to take the necessary steps to protect other motorists.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Texas allows violators to take safe driving courses to avoid a blemish on their record; it does not now require them to take such courses. HB 2095 would impose a new mandate on drivers and interfere with judicial discretion. This would veer sharply from the original intent of the safe driving education provisions, which was to allow drivers to clean their slates for insurance purposes.

**NOTES:**

The committee amendments would require courts to order to safety course for persons convicted of driving 90 miles or faster and report dismissed charges and complaints to DPS.