

SB 443 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Sen. Boquist

Senate Committee On Business and General Government

Action Date: 04/09/19
Action: Do pass.
Vote: 3-2-0-0
Yeas: 3 - Dembrow, Hass, Riley
Nays: 2 - Girod, Olsen
Fiscal: Has minimal fiscal impact
Revenue: No revenue impact
Prepared By: Tyler Larson, LPRO Analyst
Meeting Dates: 2/21, 4/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires use of headlights at all times when vehicle is driven upon a highway. Makes failure to use headlights a Class B traffic violation.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Potential safety benefits of mandatory headlight use
- Impact of mandatory headlight use on older vehicles
- Maximum fines for Class B traffic violations and potential impact of new violation on drivers

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Current statute requires drivers to use headlights bright enough to reveal persons and vehicles on the highway at a safe distance in advance of the vehicle when limited visibility conditions exist. Failure to use headlights when required for limited visibility is a Class B traffic violation.

A 2017 review of multiple studies by the National Law Review concluded that turning on headlights while driving may reduce accidents. The review notes that Denmark saw a 37 percent reduction in left turn related incidents after requiring daytime running lights, and Canada saw an 11 percent reduction in multiple vehicle crashes after enacting a similar requirement.

Senate Bill 443 requires headlights to be used whenever a vehicle is driven on any public road and makes failure to use headlights a Class B traffic violation. Class B traffic violations are subject to a \$265 presumptive fine, with a minimum of \$135 and a maximum of \$1,000.