SENATE JUDICIARY
EXHIBIT NO. 7
DATE 1/31/13
BILL NO. SB 186

Honorable Chairman & members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Becky Stockton & I am opposed to SB 237. I am not opposed to wearing a seatbelt but I do oppose the government nannies telling me that I have to. As a responsible & proud American I am appalled that the government thinks they know better than I do! There is already a secondary law in place & I abide by that law because I am a responsible citizen.

The sponsor of the bill will tell you that we need to increase the usage of seatbelts to decrease the number of deaths & each session I have heard that our usage has increased so why do we need to go to a primary? Is it because the Highway patrol needs to raise some funds?

Can the proponents tell the committee, without a benefit of a doubt that seatbelts always stay engage to restrain the occupant in the car? How do you know if the occupant had his or hers seatbelt on? It could of malfunctioned. God only knows the answer to this.

How many of these accidents were caused by drunken drivers who did not abide to the law & drove while drunk & did not wear their seatbelt? It is known that drunken drivers do not wear seatbelts.

I read in 1987 testimony from Col. Robert Landon, chief administrator, Montana Highway Patrol, "He said this bill (secondary seatbelt) will be needed to keep the fatality rate down because history has shown that in every case where speed is increased, the number of people killed also increases. Twenty-two years later the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety has this to say about speeding. "Speeding is a factor in about one-third of all fatal crashes, killing more than 1,000 Americans every month. In 2006, more than 13,500 people died in speed-related crashes. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that the economic costs of speed-related crashes is more than $40 billion each year.

In a high-speed crash, a passenger vehicle is subjected to forces so severe that the vehicle structure cannot withstand the force of the crash and maintain survival space in the occupant compartment. Likewise, as crash speeds get very high, restraint systems such as airbags and safety belts cannot keep the forces on occupants below severe injury levels.

Speed influences the risk of crashes and crash injuries in three basic ways:

* It increases the distance a vehicle travels from the time a driver detects an emergency to the time the driver reacts.
* It increases the distance needed to stop a vehicle once an emergency is perceived.
* It increases the crash energy by the square of the speeds. When impact speed increases from 40 to 60 mph (a 50 percent increase), the energy that needs to be managed increases by 125 percent. To me, speeding is more a concern than me wearing my seatbelt!

For practical reasons, there are limits to the amount of crash energy that can be managed by vehicles, restraint systems, and roadway hardware such as barriers and impact attenuators. The higher the speed, the more likely that these limits will be exceeded in crashes, thus limiting the protection available for vehicle occupants. To put speed into perspective, remember that government crash tests for occupant protection are conducted at speeds of 30-35 mph, and these are severe impact speeds." To me speeding is more a concern than a primary seatbelt law.

Today, you heard evidence of how the seatbelt saves lives, but there is also evidence they don't always prevent a death. I have an article right here that says, "Of the three people in the vehicles, only Mogenson, the fatality, was wearing her seatbelt. She died at the scene of the crash." Another article states that a Ronan man was killed. "The victim was wearing his seatbelt, and the MHP is still looking into whether or not speed or alcohol were factors in the accident." The third article is about a 6 year old child who missed the school bus & decided to drive his parents car to school. He slammed into a telephone pole so hard that it broke the upper board (according to the video). The article does not state he was not wearing a seatbelt but the Virginia State Police said: "the boy is not particularly tall for his age and was "possibly standing" while

driving." So I would assume he did not have his seatbelt engaged. The result was good; the deputy did not find any injuries. My point is that seatbelts are not always the saving factor in a car accident. Sometimes they prevent death & sometimes they do not. People die & we can't change that. That is life!

I have another article that was recently printed in the Great Falls Tribune that stated fatalities have tapered off in 2008, in fact, 49 less fatalities than in 2007. Isn't that great news! And we did this with a secondary seatbelt law. That should decrease the cost in health related costs. It also was mentioned in the article that the drop could be attributed to the Montana Department of Transportation's increased efforts on seatbelt education, which I appreciate. Education is always good!

There also was an unscientific survey done on the Helena Independent Record web site on 9/22/2008 regarding whether the respondents wanted a primary or secondary seatbelt law. The results was as follows: "Of the 1,500 or so respondents to our unscientific survey, about 65 percent said "NO" to changing the law. "

Another big problem is the amount of money attached to this bill. Why do we need the Feds money? The number of miles driven decreased this year so the revenue from the Federal excised gas tax went down & with the downturn of the economy, there will be no money to give unless they raise our taxes and since I am a taxpayer I don't want them raised!

While a seatbelt may save lives, a seatbelt has never prevented a crash. Most crashes are due to distractions, like drunken driving, cell phone use, disruption by children, smoking, putting make-up on, adjusting the radio dials, watching movies, eating & drinking while driving & etc.

I have also included in my testimony an article written by Ted Balaker from the Reason Foundation, titled, "Do Seatbelt Laws Save Lives?" It is well written & worthy of your time to read.

To end my testimony I have a quote from Eric Skrum, Communications Director of National Motorists Association: "Primary enforcement will increase motorist harassment, erode personal freedom, & set the stage for more onerous and punitive governmental measures."

In conclusion, I think our present law is working well. I ask the committee today to please vote "NO" on this legislation.

Becky Stockton
1430 Boston Road
Helena, MT 59602
449-3670