

39:3B-10 et seq.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY CHECKLIST  
Compiled by the NJ State Law Library

NJSA: 39:3B-10 et seq (School buses--seat belts)

LAWS OF: 1992 CHAPTER: 92

BILL NO: S291

SPONSOR(S) Bassano and others

DATE INTRODUCED: February 10, 1992

COMMITTEE: ASSEMBLY: Education; Judiciary

SENATE: Judiciary

AMENDED DURING PASSAGE: Yes Amendments during passage denoted by asterisks

DATE OF PASSAGE: ASSEMBLY: July 20, 1992

SENATE: May 7, 1992

DATE OF APPROVAL: September 9, 1992

FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ARE ATTACHED IF AVAILABLE:

SPONSOR STATEMENT: Yes

COMMITTEE STATEMENT: ASSEMBLY: Yes

SENATE: Yes

FISCAL NOTE: Yes

VETO MESSAGE: No

MESSAGE ON SIGNING: Yes

FOLLOWING WERE PRINTED:

REPORTS: No

HEARINGS: No

See:

974.90 New Jersey Institute of Technology.

S128 School bus safety belt study: performed for the New Jersey

1989c Department of Law & Public Safety. December, 1989.

Public hearing on bill during previous

974.90 New Jersey. Legislature Assembly. Committee on Education.

D24 Public hearing on. Assembly bills 735, 878, 926, 1142, 1545,

1986a/z 2369. School bus safety equipment. November 6, 1989. Trenton, 1986.

DEPOSITORY COPY  
Do Not Remove From Library

[FIRST REPRINT]

SENATE, No. 291

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 10, 1992

By Senators BASSANO, Matheussen, Kosco, LaRossa,  
Smith, Inverso and Sinagra

1 AN ACT requiring certain equipment for school buses and  
2 supplementing chapter 3B of Title 39 of the Revised Statutes.

3  
4 BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*  
5 *State of New Jersey:*

6 1. In addition to the requirements in Federal Motor Vehicle  
7 Safety Standard No. 222 (49 CFR §571.222) concerning school bus  
8 passenger seating and crash protection, each school bus as  
9 defined in R.S.39:1-1 shall be equipped with seats of a minimum  
10 seat back height of 28 inches, or 24 inches as measured from the  
11 seating reference point, and seat belts of the lap belt type for  
12 each seating position on the bus <sup>1</sup>or other child restraint systems  
13 that are in conformity with applicable federal standards<sup>1</sup>. The  
14 design and installation of seat belts <sup>1</sup>or other child restraint  
15 systems that are in conformity with applicable federal standards<sup>1</sup>  
16 shall conform to the regulations promulgated by the State Board  
17 of Education, in consultation with the Director of the Division of  
18 Motor Vehicles in the Department of Law and Public Safety. The  
19 State board shall promulgate regulations, pursuant to the  
20 "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et  
21 seq.), for the design and installation of seat belts <sup>1</sup>or other child  
22 restraint systems that are in conformity with applicable federal  
23 standards<sup>1</sup>.

24 As used in this section, "seating reference point" shall be  
25 defined as the term is defined in 49 CFR §571.3.

26 2. Beginning on September 1 of the second year next following  
27 the year of enactment of P.L. , c. (C. ) (now pending  
28 before the Legislature as this bill), each passenger on a school bus  
29 which is equipped with seat belts shall wear a properly adjusted  
30 and fastened seat belt <sup>1</sup>or other child restraint system that is in  
31 conformity with applicable federal standards<sup>1</sup> at all times while  
32 the bus is in operation. Nothing in this section shall make the  
33 owner or operator of a school bus liable for failure to properly  
34 adjust and fasten a seat belt <sup>1</sup>or other child restraint system that  
35 is in conformity with applicable federal standards<sup>1</sup> for a  
36 passenger who sustains injury as a direct result of the passenger's  
37 failure to comply with the requirement established by this section.

38 3. This act shall take effect immediately, but section 1 shall  
39 apply only to school buses and equipment for which, on or after  
40 the effective date of this act, a bid is submitted or an order for  
41 purchase placed.

EXPLANATION--Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the  
above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Assembly AJL committee amendments adopted June 15, 1992.

1

2

3 Requires certain seat height and seat belts or child restraint  
4 systems on school buses; requires use of belts or restraint system.

**SENATE, No. 291**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 10, 1992**

**By Senator BASSANO**

1 **AN ACT** requiring certain equipment for school buses and  
2 supplementing chapter 3B of Title 39 of the Revised Statutes.

3  
4 **BE IT ENACTED** by the Senate and General Assembly of the  
5 *State of New Jersey*:

6 1. In addition to the requirements in Federal Motor Vehicle  
7 Safety Standard No. 222 (49 CFR §571.222) concerning school bus  
8 passenger seating and crash protection, each school bus as  
9 defined in R.S.39:1-1 shall be equipped with seats of a minimum  
10 seat back height of 28 inches, or 24 inches as measured from the  
11 seating reference point, and seat belts of the lap belt type for  
12 each seating position on the bus. The design and installation of  
13 seat belts shall conform to the regulations promulgated by the  
14 State Board of Education, in consultation with the Director of the  
15 Division of Motor Vehicles in the Department of Law and Public  
16 Safety. The State board shall promulgate regulations, pursuant to  
17 the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1  
18 et seq.), for the design and installation of seat belts.

19 As used in this section, "seating reference point" shall be  
20 defined as the term is defined in 49 CFR §571.3.

21 2. Beginning on September 1 of the second year next following  
22 the year of enactment of P.L. , c. (C. ) (now pending  
23 before the Legislature as this bill), each passenger on a school bus  
24 which is equipped with seat belts shall wear a properly adjusted  
25 and fastened seat belt at all times while the bus is in operation.  
26 Nothing in this section shall make the owner or operator of a  
27 school bus liable for failure to properly adjust and fasten a seat  
28 belt for a passenger who sustains injury as a direct result of the  
29 passenger's failure to comply with the requirement established  
30 by this section.

31 3. This act shall take effect immediately, but section 1 shall  
32 apply only to school buses and equipment for which, on or after  
33 the effective date of this act, a bid is submitted or an order for  
34 purchase placed.

35  
36  
37

**STATEMENT**

38  
39 This bill requires school buses to be equipped with the lap type  
40 seat belts. This requirement will apply only to school buses for  
41 which a bid is submitted, or an order to purchase placed, on or  
42 after the enactment of the law. Retrofitting of existing school  
43 buses with seat belts will not be required.

44 This bill also requires that all school buses be equipped with a  
45 minimum seat back height of 28 inches or 24 inches from the  
46 seating reference point.

1       These requirements would be in addition to the standards in  
2       Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 222, promulgated by  
3       the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of the U.S.  
4       Department of Transportation for school bus passenger seating  
5       and crash protection. All school bus manufacturers are required  
6       to comply with this federal standard. In addition, this bill  
7       provides that the owner or operator of a school bus has no  
8       liability for failure to properly adjust and fasten a seat belt for a  
9       passenger who sustains injury as a direct result of the passenger's  
10      failure to use a seat belt.

11      Finally, the bill requires that, as of September 1 of the second  
12      year following enactment of the substitute into law, all  
13      passengers in a school bus with seat belts will have to wear a  
14      properly adjusted and fastened seat belt at all times while the bus  
15      is in operation.

16      A December 1989 study conducted by the New Jersey Institute  
17      of Technology, Center for Transportation Studies and Research,  
18      recommends that "both Type I and Type II school buses should be  
19      required to be equipped with seat belts in the State of New  
20      Jersey." The study concludes that school buses are the safest  
21      mode of transportation; however, accidents do happen and pupils  
22      continue to be injured and killed in the interior of a bus.  
23      According to the study, seat belts will cost the taxpayers of this  
24      State about \$1 million per year, but in return approximately 0.074  
25      fatalities, five incapacitating injuries and 21 nonincapacitating  
26      injuries will be prevented per year. The study further  
27      recommends that seat belt use for all occupants of school buses  
28      with seat belts should be mandatory.

29

30

31

32

33      Requires certain seat height and seat belts on school buses;  
34      requires use of seat belts on school buses.

ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY, LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY  
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

**SENATE, No. 291**

with committee amendments

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: JUNE 15, 1992

The Assembly Judiciary, Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Senate Bill No. 291.

This bill requires school buses to be equipped with lap type seat belts. This requirement will apply only to school buses for which a bid is submitted, or an order to purchase placed, on or after the enactment of the bill into law. Retrofitting of existing school buses with seat belts will not be required. The committee amended the bill to provide that other child restraint systems that are in conformity with applicable federal standards may be an alternative to the seat belt of the lap belt type to provide for developing technology in this area. Examples that were discussed included the three-point type of belt or a bar that descends over the student similar to ones used on roller coaster rides.

This bill also requires that all school buses be equipped with a minimum seat back height of 28 inches or 24 inches from the seating reference point.

These requirements would be in addition to the standards in Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 222, promulgated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation for school bus passenger seating and crash protection. All school bus manufacturers are required to comply with this federal standard.

Finally, the bill requires that, as of September 1 of the second year following enactment of the bill into law, all passengers in a school bus with seat belts will have to wear a properly adjusted and fastened seat belt at all times while the bus is in operation. In addition, this bill provides that the owner or operator of a school bus will not be liable for a failure to properly adjust and fasten a seat belt for a passenger who sustains injury as a direct result of the passenger's failure to use a seat belt. Again, references were made by committee amendment to an alternative child restraint system that is in conformity with federal standards in this section of the bill for consistency.

"Type 1" school vehicles are defined in N.J.S.A. 39:1-1 as any vehicle with a seating capacity of 17 or more, used to transport enrolled children to or from a school, school connected activity, day camp, summer day camp, nursery school child care center, preschool center or other similar places of education. "Type 2" school vehicles are defined similarly but with a seating capacity of 16 or less.

This bill is identical to Assembly Bill No. 1216(1R).

SENATE LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 291

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: APRIL 2, 1992

The Senate Law and Public Safety Committee favorably reports Senate Bill No. 291.

This bill requires school buses to be equipped with lap type seat belts. This requirement will apply only to school buses for which a bid is submitted, or an order to purchase placed, on or after the enactment of the bill into law. Retrofitting of existing school buses with seat belts will not be required.

This bill also requires that all school buses be equipped with a minimum seat back height of 28 inches or 24 inches from the seating reference point.

These requirements would be in addition to the standards in Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 222, promulgated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of the U.S. Department of Transportation for school bus passenger seating and crash protection. All school bus manufacturers are required to comply with this federal standard. In addition, this bill provides that the owner or operator of a school bus will not be liable for a failure to properly adjust and fasten a seat belt for a passenger who sustains injury as a direct result of the passenger's failure to use a seat belt.

Finally, the bill requires that, as of September 1 of the second year following enactment of the bill into law, all passengers in a school bus with seat belts will have to wear a properly adjusted and fastened seat belt at all times while the bus is in operation.

A December 1989 study conducted by the New Jersey Institute of Technology, Center for Transportation Studies and Research, recommends that "both Type I and Type II school buses should be required to be equipped with seat belts in the State of New Jersey." The study concludes that school buses are the safest mode of transportation; however, accidents do happen and pupils continue to be injured and killed in the interior of a bus. According to the study, seat belts will cost the taxpayers of this State about \$1 million per year, but in return approximately 0.074 fatalities, five incapacitating injuries and 21 nonincapacitating injuries will be prevented per year. The study further recommends that seat belt use for all occupants of school buses with seat belts should be mandatory.

LEGISLATIVE FISCAL ESTIMATE TO

[FIRST REPRINT]

SENATE, No. 291

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: July 13, 1992

Senate Bill No. 291 [1R] of 1992 requires school buses purchased after the effective date of this bill to be equipped with lap-type seat belts or other child restraint systems that are in conformity with applicable federal standards, and a minimum seat back height of 28 inches, or 24 inches from the seating reference point.

This bill's requirements are in addition to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 222 of the U.S. Department of Transportation pertaining to school bus safety. Currently, all school bus manufacturers are required to comply with this federal standard.

This bill would affect Type I school buses (those over 10,000 lbs. in weight) and Type II school buses (those 10,000 lbs. or less in weight) purchased after its effective date. Higher seat backs than those presently used would have to be installed in both types of buses. Seat belts or other child restraint systems that are in conformity with applicable federal standards, would have to be added only in Type I buses. Type II buses are presently purchased with seat belts in compliance with a federal requirement.

The Department of Education estimated that, for a similar bill in the 1990-91 Legislative Session (S-1374), the cost to local school districts in the first two years following enactment would be approximately \$1,350,000 and \$1,417,500, respectively. This estimate, which did not include the alternative child restraint system options, was based on the following assumptions:

- 1) Approximately 900 Type I buses are purchased annually. Type II buses would not be affected because they are already required to have this equipment;
- 2) the cost of adding higher backed seats and seat belts to Type I buses was approximately \$1,500 per bus; and
- 3) the inflation rate is constant at 5 percent annually.

Using the department's assumptions, third year costs would be \$1,488,375.

The Department of Education noted that these expenditures would be made by local school districts. Furthermore, under the Quality Education Act, State transportation aid would not be affected unless and until the transportation aid formula constants are adjusted. This is not scheduled to occur until 1992, and districts would not realize the effects of that adjustment until fiscal year 1994, according to the department.

The Office of Legislative Services (OLS) does not concur with the Department of Education estimate. The department's first assumption fails to recognize that although Type II buses presently



are purchased with seat belts, they do not have the higher backed seats required by this bill. Furthermore, the department's estimate does not include seat belt maintenance costs.

Therefore, adjusting for these factors, OLS estimates that in the first three years following enactment this bill will cost local school districts approximately \$1,462,500, \$1,567,100 and \$1,678,600, respectively. The following additional assumptions were made:

- 1) 500 Type II buses would be purchased annually (Presently, 4,928 Type II buses are in use.);
- 2) the additional cost of the higher backed seats for Type II buses is \$225; and
- 3) the cost for maintaining seat belts is approximately \$35 per bus and will begin one year after the first of the 900 Type I buses with seat belts are purchased.

This OLS estimate does not include an estimate of the cost of any alternative child restraint systems which could be used in place of seat belts. The type of alternative restraint systems that individual school districts or their bus service providers would choose is unknown. Further, the cost of the various alternatives and the extent to which alternative restraint systems would be used instead of seat belts is also unknown.

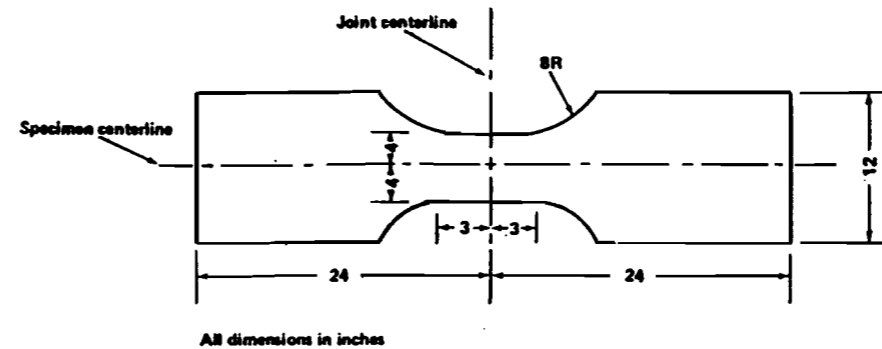
It should be noted that New Jersey school districts own approximately 40 percent of the school buses they use, and the other 60 percent are owned by private companies which contract with school districts to provide service. Therefore, approximately 40 percent of the bill's cost would be paid directly by the school districts in the form of higher bus prices, and 60 percent would be paid indirectly as contract price increases.

This estimate does not address the costs to other organizations affected by this bill, such as other governmental units, private schools, and camps, which own school buses.

This legislative fiscal estimate has been produced by the Office of Legislative Services due to the failure of the Executive Branch to respond to our request for a fiscal note.

This fiscal estimate has been prepared pursuant to P.L.1980, c.67.

FIGURE 1



(a) If the mechanical properties of a material are specified by the American Society for Testing and Materials, the relative tensile strength for such a material is the minimum tensile strength specified for that material in the 1973 edition of the Annual Book of ASTM Standards.

(b) If the mechanical properties of a material are not specified by the American Society for Testing and Materials, determine its tensile strength by cutting a specimen from the bus body outside the area of the joint and by testing it in accordance with S6.3.

**S6.3 Strength test.**

**S6.3.1** Grip the joint specimen on opposite sides of the joint in a tension testing machine calibrated in accordance with Method E4, Verification of Testing Machines, of the American Society for Testing and Materials (1973 Annual Book of ASTM Standards).

**S6.3.2** Adjust the testing machine grips so that the joint, under load, will be in stress approximately perpendicular to the joint.

**S6.3.3** Apply a tensile force to the specimen by separating the heads of the testing machine at any uniform rate not less than 1/8 inch and not more than 3/8-inch per minute until the specimen separates.

[41 FR 3872, Jan. 27, 1976, as amended at 41 FR 36027, Aug. 26, 1976]

§ 571.222 Standard No. 222; School bus passenger seating and crash protection.

**S1. Scope.** This standard establishes occupant protection requirements for school bus passenger seating and restraining barriers.

**S2. Purpose.** The purpose of this standard is to reduce the number of deaths and the severity of injuries that result from the impact of school bus occupants against structures within the vehicle during crashes and sudden driving maneuvers.

**S3. Application.** This standard applies to school buses.

**S4. Definitions.** *Contactable surface* means any surface within the zone specified in S.5.3.1.1 that is contactable from any direction by the test device described in S6.6, except any surface on the front of a seat back or restraining barrier 3 inches or more below the top of the seat back or restraining barrier.

*School bus passenger seat* means a seat in a school bus, other than the driver's seat or a seat installed to accommodate handicapped or convalescent passengers as evidenced by orientation of the seat in a direction that is more than 45 degrees to the left or right of the longitudinal centerline of the vehicle.

**S4.1** The number of seating positions considered to be in a bench seat is expressed by the symbol W, and calculated as the bench width in inches

divided by 15 and rounded to the nearest whole number.

S5. *Requirements.* (a) Each vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 10,000 pounds shall be capable of meeting any of the requirements set forth under this heading when tested under the conditions of S6. However, a particular school bus passenger seat (i.e., test specimen) in that weight class need not meet further requirements after having met S5.1.2 and S5.1.5, or having been subjected to either S5.1.3, S5.1.4, or S5.3.

(b) Each vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or less shall be capable of meeting the following requirements at all seating positions other than the driver's seat:

(1)(A) In the case of vehicles manufactured before September 1, 1991, the requirements of §§ 571.208, 571.209, and 571.210 as they apply to multipurpose passenger vehicles; or

(B) In the case of vehicles manufactured on or after September 1, 1991, the requirements of S4.4.3.3 of § 571.208 and the requirements of §§ 571.209 and 571.210 as they apply to school buses with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or less; and

(2) The requirements of S5.1.2, S5.1.3, S5.1.4, S5.1.5, and S5.3 of this standard. However, the requirements of §§ 571.208 and 571.210 shall be met at W seating positions in a bench seat using a body block as specified in Figure 2 of this standard, and a particular school bus passenger seat (i.e., a test specimen) in that weight class need not meet further requirements after having met S5.1.2 and S5.1.5, or after having been subjected to either S5.1.3, S5.1.4, or S5.3 of this standard or § 571.210.

S5.1 *Seating requirements.* School bus passenger seats shall be forward facing.

S5.1.1 [Reserved]

S5.1.2 *Seat back height and surface area.* Each school bus passenger seat shall be equipped with a seat back that, in the front projected view, has a front surface area above the horizontal plane that passes through the seating reference point, and below the horizontal plane 20 inches above the seating reference point, of not less

than 90 percent of the sea bench width in inches multiplied by 20.

S5.1.3 *Seat performance forward.* When a school bus passenger seat that has another seat behind it is subjected to the application of force as specified in S5.1.3.1 and S5.1.3.2, and subsequently, the application of additional force to the seat back as specified in S5.1.3.3 and S5.1.3.4:

(a) The seat back force/deflection curve shall fall within the zone specified in Figure 1;

(b) Seat back deflection shall not exceed 14 inches; (for determination of (a) and (b) the force/deflection curve describes only the force applied through the upper loading bar, and only the forward travel of the pivot attachment point of the upper loading bar, measured from the point at which the initial application of 10 pounds of force is attained.)

(c) The seat shall not deflect by an amount such that any part of the seat moves to within 4 inches of any part of another school bus passenger seat or restraining barrier in its originally installed position;

(d) The seat shall not separate from the vehicle at any attachment point; and

(e) Seat components shall not separate at any attachment point.

S5.1.3.1 Position the loading bar specified in S6.5 so that it is laterally centered behind the seat back with the bar's longitudinal axis in a transverse plane of the vehicle and in any horizontal plane between 4 inches above and 4 inches below the seating reference point of the school bus passenger seat behind the test specimen.

S5.1.3.2 Apply a force of 700W pounds horizontally in the forward direction through the loading bar at the pivot attachment point. Reach the specified load in not less than 5 nor more than 30 seconds.

S5.1.3.3 No sooner than 1.0 second after attaining the required force, reduce that force to 350W pounds and, while maintaining the pivot point position of the first loading bar at the position where the 350W pounds is attained, position a second loading bar described in S6.5 so that it is laterally centered behind the seat back with the bar's longitudinal axis in a trans-

verse plane of the vehicle and in the horizontal plane 16 inches above the seating reference point of the school bus passenger seat behind the test specimen, and move the bar forward against the seat back until a force of 10 pounds has been applied.

S5.1.3.4 Apply additional force horizontally in the forward direction through the upper bar until 4,000W inch-pounds of energy have been absorbed in deflecting the seat back (or restraining barrier). Apply the additional load in not less than 5 seconds nor more than 30 seconds. Maintain the pivot attachment point in the maximum forward travel position for not less than 5 seconds nor more than 10 seconds and release the load in not less than 5 nor more than 30 seconds. (For the determination of S5.1.3.4, the force/deflection curve describes only the force applied through the upper loading bar, and the rearward travel distance of the upper loading bar pivot attachment point measured from the position at which the initial application of 10 pounds of force is attained.)

S5.1.4 *Seat performance rearward.* When a school bus passenger seat that has another seat behind it is subjected to the application of force as specified in S5.1.4.1 and S5.1.4.2:

(a) Seat back force shall not exceed 2,200 pounds;

(b) In the case of a school bus manufactured on or after April 1, 1978, seat back deflection shall not exceed 10 inches; (For determination of (a) and (b) the force/deflection curve describes only the force applied through the loading bar, and only the rearward travel of the pivot attachment point of the loading bar, measured from the point at which the initial application of 50 pounds of force is attained.)

(c) The seat shall not deflect by an amount such that any part of the seat moves to within 4 inches of any part of another passenger seat in its originally installed position;

(d) The seat shall not separate from the vehicle at any attachment point; and

(e) Seat components shall not separate at any attachment point.

S5.1.4.1 Position the loading bar described in S6.5 so that it is laterally

centered forward of the seat back with the bar's longitudinal axis in a transverse plane of the vehicle and in the horizontal plane 13.5 inches above the seating reference point of the test specimen, and move the loading bar rearward against the seat back until a force of 50 pounds has been applied.

S5.1.4.2 Apply additional force horizontally rearward through the loading bar until 2,800W inch-pounds of energy has been absorbed in deflecting the seat back. Apply the additional load in not less than 5 seconds nor more than 30 seconds. Maintain the pivot attachment point in the maximum rearward travel position for not less than 5 seconds nor more than 10 seconds and release the load in not less than 5 seconds.

S5.1.5 *Seat cushion retention.* In the case of school bus passenger seats equipped with seat cushions, with all manual attachment devices between the seat and the seat cushion in the manufacturer's designed position for attachment, the seat cushion shall not separate from the seat at any attachment point when subjected to an upward force of five times the seat cushion weight, applied in any period of not less than 1 nor more than 5 seconds, and maintained for 5 seconds.

S5.2 *Restraining barrier requirements.* Each vehicle shall be equipped with a restraining barrier forward of any designated seating position that does not have the rear surface of another school bus passenger seat within 24 inches of its seating reference point, measured along a horizontal longitudinal line through the seating reference point in the forward direction.

S5.2.1 *Barrier-seat separation.* The horizontal distance between the restraining barrier's rear surface and the seating reference point of the seat in front of which the barrier is required shall not be more than 24 inches measured along a horizontal longitudinal



S291

# OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR NEWS RELEASE

**CN-001**  
**Contact:**

Jon Shure  
Jo Glading  
609/777-2600

**TRENTON, N.J. 08625**  
**Release:**

Tuesday  
Sept. 8, 1992

## **GOVERNOR SIGNS SCHOOL BUS SEAT BELT LAWS** *New Jersey First State To Mandate Safety Measures*

**WEST ORANGE** -- After a nearly 20-year legislative gridlock, Governor Jim Florio today signed legislation requiring new school buses to be equipped with seat belts and roof escape hatches -- making New Jersey the first state in the nation to mandate school bus safety as law.

"This legislation is for the children of New Jersey. New Jersey is now the first state in the nation to write the ABCs of school bus safety into law. Parents will send their children off to school knowing that they are buckled up for safety in the very best school buses on the road," said Governor Florio, at the Roosevelt Middle School, which as part of the West Orange School District, has voluntarily required seat belts on all new district buses.

"Our most basic values tell us that these new rules are a good deal for the children of New Jersey. One child's life saved or protected from serious injury is beyond price," he said.

The two-prong safety measures require all new school buses to be equipped with seat belts, 28-inch seat backs and roof hatches. Approximately 900 new large buses are purchased each year. Although some New Jersey school districts and other states have voluntarily undertaken school bus seat belt efforts, New Jersey is the first state to mandate these safety measures.

The legislative debate over seat belts on school buses has raged for the past 19 years. In April, Governor Florio had urged the state's consumer advocates to help break the gridlock and push for passage of the legislation. A 1989 study by the New Jersey Institute of Technology, commissioned by the state, concluded that installing belts would improve overall safety performance. The law has the support of the state PTA and the state Board of Education.

- more -

**"Research, experience and common sense all say that seat belts protect children. Twenty years ago, we didn't require anyone to wear seat belts. Then we got smart about cars, but the lack of school bus belts undermined that important message," Governor Florio said. "Our seat belt and roof hatch laws are simple common sense, and they are an important lesson in responsibility and consistency. Now kids will know that in a car or in a school bus, you must buckle up."**

**"In an accident, every minute counts. This bill is now the law because a team of every day heroes fought the special interests. They never gave up for one simple reason -- the safety of our children depended on it and every family in New Jersey is a winner today."**

**Senator Louis Bassano and Assemblypersons Harriet Derman and John Kelly are the sponsors of both S 356/A 1494, which requires two roof hatches, and S 291/A 1216, which requires certain seat height and seat belts on school buses.**

**# # #**