

News Release



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HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE FORWARDS BILL TO DOUBLE DRIVER TRAINING COSTS

Eleventh Hour Legislation also eliminates state supervision of public school training programs

BOISE - House Bill 314, last minute legislation introduced just last Friday — and which could be voted on in the next few days — will double the cost for the ten thousand families who opt to send their teens to driver training through public schools, AAA Idaho said today.

The House Education Committee today agreed on a 14-3 vote that parents should pay more for the privilege of driving, and that those parents who cannot afford to pay more can opt to wait for their teens to turn 17, the age at which driver training is not required to get a license.

"AAA Idaho is astounded that the committee would trade access to a program that places a high priority on producing safe drivers for a \$2.2 million Public School Income Fund," said AAA Idaho Director of Public and Government Affairs Dave Carlson.

Carlson said the legislation is counterintuitive to the higher risks young drivers pose to themselves and others, and may be further degraded with the enactment of such legislation. Representing under 6 percent of licensed drivers in Idaho, drivers ages 15 to 19 are involved in 2.6 times as many crashes as would be expected. In 2009, nearly one out of every four crashes involved a youthful driver.

"As the state works to provide uniform, comprehensive training available to teens throughout the state, it has demonstrated an interest in making safety a priority," Carlson said. "Until now, it has also shown that it can provide affordable training in remote and financially stricken areas of the state."

Harold Ott, representing the Idaho Rural Schools Association, testified that financially distressed rural areas might opt not to provide driver training without the current \$125 state reimbursement. Last year, the state programs provided reimbursement for 10,000 Idaho students through programs administered by the Department of Education.

The legislation doesn't automatically cut programs, but in Washington the number of school districts offering driver training dropped from 400 to 80 when public funding was withdrawn. Commercial driving schools supported today's measure.

Sherri Wood with the Idaho Education Association also testified against the bill. She said all students should have access to affordable driver education and "more importantly be trained appropriately, learning the skills necessary to drive safely." She said the bill's \$2.2 million payoff to the public school income fund is not is not worth the tradeoff for safe drivers.

She said some parents in poverty will make the necessary decision to forego costlier driver training programs. Currently, students pay \$125 for programs administered by the schools. The driver training account reimburses the schools \$125 for each student.

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