

The National Coalition for School Bus Safety

**P.O. Box 1616
Torrington, CT 06790**

PRESS RELEASE

FRIDAY APRIL 30, 1999 - Florida Legislature will require seatbelts on school buses

Florida state lawmakers voted 114 to 4 to pass House Bill #21 that requires all new public school buses purchased after December 31, 2000 to be equipped with 28 inch-high seat backs and seatbelts in all passenger positions. The law will also require seatbelt use.

Florida joins the ranks of New York and New Jersey that already have similar requirements. There are also over 300 communities outside of these states that have mandated seatbelts for their school buses. The National PTA (Parent-Teacher-Association) supports seatbelts on school buses. The PTA passed a resolution at their last convention to encourage all PTA members to push for safer school buses with seatbelts.

This year over 31 states have considered legislation to require seatbelts on school buses. A strong and well funded industry lobby has succeeded in de-railing most of these initiatives.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

Visit www.ncsbs.org

Contact: Mary Lynn Cullen or David Cullen, Co-Chairs Florida Chapter NCSBS
941-351-6595

✓ Dr. Alan L. Ross, Pres. National Coalition for School Bus Safety
888-SAF-BELT or 860-489-1234



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P.O. Box 1616
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April 20, 1999

Tom Freedman
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Room 213 OEOB
Washington, DC 20502

copy

Dear Mr. Freedman;

Thank you for taking an interest in the safety of school bus transportation. The school bus industry would tell you that the large yellow school bus is the safest form of transportation in the world. Today, most parents would express a well-founded disbelief and concern!

Why do most of our school buses lack seatbelts, strobe lights (vs. Incandescent), swing or crossing arms (pedestrian protection), roof hatches (emergency escape), flame-retardant materials and MORE. The European countries use a heavier and safer motorcoach type of vehicle instead of our "school bus". Additionally, they require seatbelts for all vehicles transporting children.

The number of passenger deaths on school buses averages less than a dozen per year. However, there are thousands of serious injuries each year. It is estimated that every child will be slightly injured in a non-crash event at least once during their multiple years of school bus usage. (non-crash event= the driver brakes quickly to avoid a crash and the child falls onto the floor)

The American Icon—the Large Yellow School Bus— has become a dinosaur because its passenger protection technology and standards have not changed since the 1970's. Federal agencies (NHTSA & NTSB) have been very slow to react to the public's awareness of these problems due to a well-funded industry opposition.. There are current NHTSA and NTSB studies on passenger restraints but these still do not address the big picture.



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The problem is not just a lack of seatbelts, it's a failure of the system to apply simple and inexpensive technology to keep our children's transportation as safe as possible. Meanwhile, more affluent parents drive their children, passenger counts are decreasing when viewed as a percentage of enrollment qualifying for bus use, and parents are upset and disillusioned that we are not optimally protecting our children.

I can be contacted at (860) 489-1234 and would be happy to provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alan L. Ross
Pres. NCSBS

Hope we CAN work
together on this!

Alan

5/2/99

