

# SENATE BILL 204 COMMITTEE REPORT



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# SB 204>SR 122: CHRONOLOGY

1. March 3, 2016—SB 204 of the 2016 Regular Session, Prefiled by Sen. Troy Carter (NOLA)
2. March 14—SB 204 introduced to the Senate and referred to the Committee on Education
3. April 13—LASTO and LSBA representatives meet with Sen. Carter and staff
4. May 12—SR 122 introduced to the Senate by Sen Carter
5. May 16—SR 122 read 2<sup>nd</sup> time and referred to Committee on Education
6. May 18—SR 122 reported favorably
7. May 19—SR 122 read by title and adopted
8. May 30—SR 122 enrolled and signed by the President of the Senate and sent to the Secretary of State.

# SB 204

- ❖ Amended R.S. 17:164.2(A) and required that “...Every bus used primarily for the transportation of students that is manufactured and purchased for use on or after January 1, 2017, shall be equipped with occupant restraint systems”;
- ❖ Repealed the provision in R.S.164.2(C) that required appropriation of funds for occupant restraint systems;
- ❖ Placed the burden of implementing the law on local school districts and private contractors.



# SR 122

- ✓ Adopted LASTO’s recommendation: that the LDOE be requested “...to establish a task force to study and make recommendations regarding student transportation and school bus passenger safety.”
- ✓ Adopted LASTO’s recommendation regarding the composition of the task force

ORGANIZATION	NO. REPS	ORGANIZATION	NO. REPS
State Supt. of Ed.	2	LA Highway Safety Comm.	1
LASTO	3	Dept. of Public Safety and Corr.	1
LSBOA	2	LA Assn. of Public Charter Schools	1
LSBA	1	Non-Public School Council	1
LASS	1	NSTA	1
LA PTA	1		

# TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Steve Vales and George Horne presented technical information to the Task Force at the initial meeting.
- ✓ Mike Comeaux (LDOE) requested information from LEAs regarding student transportation-related injuries and fatalities.
- ✓ A draft report was prepared and distributed to task force members for review and comments.
- ✓ The final draft was transmitted to the Louisiana Senate on January 31, 2017, as required by SR 122.



# TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS



1. At this time, seat belts should not be mandated for school buses in Louisiana.
2. If occupant restraints are mandated by an act of the Legislature, the Legislature should appropriate monies for funding for three-point seat belts and for employing a school bus attendant for every school bus so equipped in order to ensure that passengers are properly restrained and to assist restrained passengers during emergency evacuations of school buses.
3. Any mandate requiring seat belts should be accompanied by an exemption for LEA school bus operators from liability in the event that passengers do not properly use seat belts and when passengers are injured due to their failure to properly use seat belts.

# TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS



4. Driver education documents should be revised to include information regarding Louisiana statutes that describe when motorists must stop for school buses.
5. The Highway Safety Commission, the Department of Education, the Office of Motor Vehicles and the Louisiana Association of School Transportation Officials should collaborate in the preparation of video scripts and documentary production to inform the general public of motorists' stopping requirements when school buses are stopped to pick up or drop off passengers.
6. The use of cameras on school buses is encouraged to assist with the enforcement of statutory requirements for illegal passing of school buses, and guidelines and procedures should be developed for schools, school districts and private contractors that are willing to equip school buses with exterior cameras to monitor traffic conditions at school bus stops.

# TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS



7. School superintendents, heads of charter schools and nonpublic schools that provide and/or receive school transportation services should ensure that school bus drivers and individual schools provide adequate school bus safety instruction to passengers.
8. The Louisiana Department of Education should adopt and encourage LEAs to train school bus drivers in the use of the recommended universal signal for school bus drivers to signal students when it is safe to cross roadways at bus stops.
9. School Superintendents, heads of charter schools and nonpublic schools that receive public school transportation services should be requested to ensure that mandated safety instruction and school bus evacuation drills for students are being provided in accordance with requirements specified in Section 1301 of Louisiana Department of Education Bulletin 119.

# TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS



10. School superintendents, heads of charter schools and nonpublic schools that provide and/or receive school transportation services should ensure that school principals are aware of the importance of adequate supervision of students at school bus loading/unloading zones on school campuses.
11. School Superintendents, heads of charter schools and nonpublic schools that receive public school transportation services should be informed of the legal consequences of over-loaded school buses.
12. Parent-teacher organizations should be requested to assist the Department of Education with opportunities for parents to be informed of rules and regulations for school bus safety and for reinforcing safety training that occurs in schools.

# TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

13. The Department of Education should create an advisory committee to recommend methods of improving school bus safety for Louisiana's students.



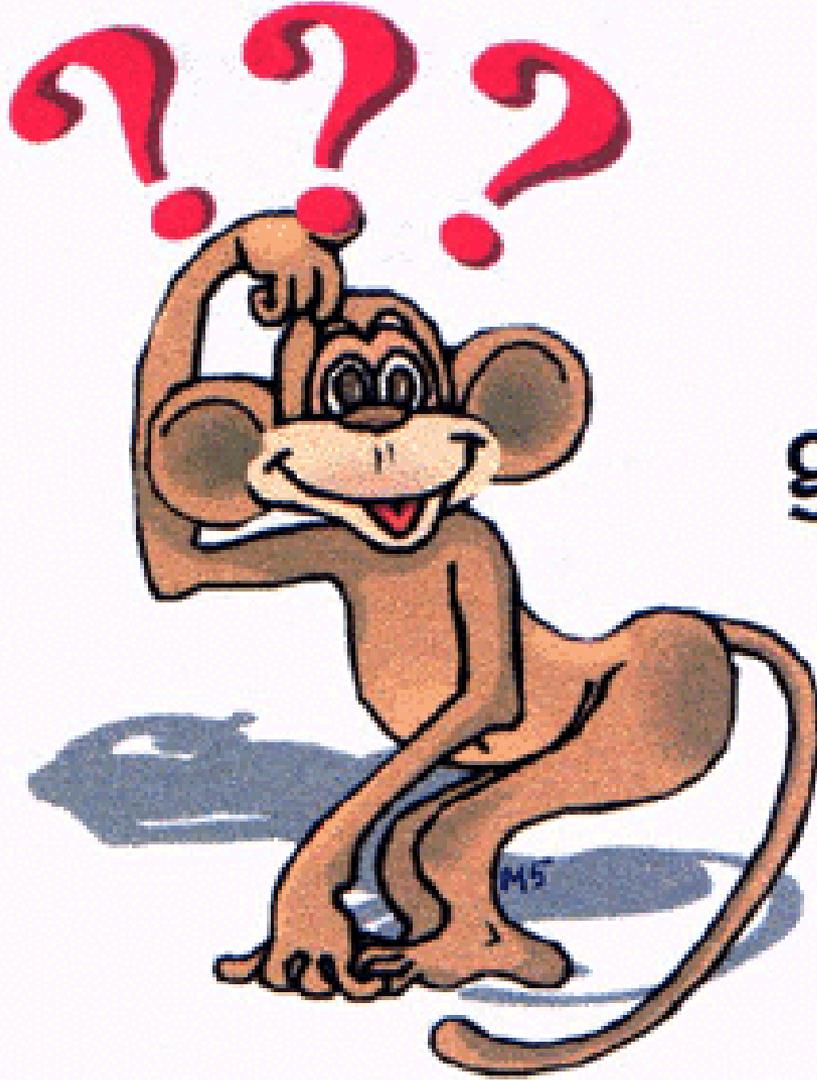
**RECOMMENDED**

# DISCUSSION POINTS

- × Each of us should be informed.
  - How safe are school buses, compared to other passenger vehicles?
  - What is meant by “occupant restraints”?
  - Are all school buses equipped with some form of occupant restraint?
  - What is the difference between “active” and “passive” restraint systems?
  - Why are “mini” buses required to have seat belts but larger (>10,000 lbs. GVWR) buses are not?
  - Where can one find information regarding “occupant restraints” and “seat belts”?
  - Are more students injured when they are passengers on a school bus or when they are traveling to/from school bus stops, waiting at bus stops or preparing to enter or to leave school buses?
  - What is the difference between “rated capacity” of school buses and “actual capacity” or “in-use capacity”?
- × Each of us should read and become familiar with the Task Force “Response to Senate Resolution 122 of the 2016 Regular Session.”

# DISCUSSION POINTS

- × Each of us should be pro-active, doing our part to implement the recommendations of the Task Force.
  - Check buses for overloading.
  - Conduct safety checks of bus stops and school loading/unloading zones.
  - Inform principals of transportation-related safety issues, as described in Bulletin 119, and retain Forms T-7 and T-8 in official files.
  - Instruct bus drivers and bus attendants in proper use of active and passive passenger restraint systems. (Training CD available at [mcs.nhtsa.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=product.display&product\\_ID=825](https://mcs.nhtsa.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=product.display&product_ID=825).)
  - Encourage bus drivers to observe and correct improper seating of school bus passengers.
  - Request schools to include school bus safety presentations during open house, parent-teacher meetings and other appropriate venues when parents are present.
- × Each of us should be alert to student transportation-related bills filed in the 2017 Legislative Session.



Questions  
are  
guaranteed in  
life;  
Answers  
aren't.