



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

Senate Bill 65

Testimony from Representative Keith Ripp and Senator Luther Olsen
Senate Committee on Transportation and Veteran Affairs

April 7th, 2015

Thank you Chairman Petrowski and the Senate Committee on Transportation and Veteran Affairs for holding a hearing and allowing me to testify in favor of Senate Bill 65.

Under current law, driver's education courses offered by public school districts must receive DPI's approval and driver's education courses offered by technical college districts must be approved by the Technical College System Board. It is important to note that currently, both public schools and technical college districts **can** offer driver's education classes online.

However, private and commercial driver's education schools, which are regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), **cannot** offer the classroom portion of Driver's Education online. This bill will remove this restriction and allow any school licensed by WisDOT to provide online training instruction instead of, or in addition to, providing it in a classroom. It is important to note that this bill only gives all schools the ability to use online training, but does not require it.

There are many reasons for supporting this bill and allowing students to take advantage of online training instruction. For instance, a student might prefer online driver's education classes due to convenience, availability of classroom courses, or preference for online learning. With modern technology, we have the ability to meet these needs.

Some advantages to making online driver education more widely available in Wisconsin include:

- Current law does not allow students in private school and homeschooled students to benefit from an online course. We would like to create parity between private and public schools for this reason.
- Students in outlying areas would have access to courses that might not otherwise be available.
- Students can learn at their own pace. Online learning allows students the opportunity to review and re-read sections that are vital to learning the safe operation and positive mental attitude required to become safe and proficient drivers.
- It provides the opportunity for parents and sponsors of teens to participate in this portion of the of the student driver training process.
- The strict standards, monitoring, and close scrutiny already developed by the DOT for online courses reduce the chance of misuse or cheating.

Studies on the effects of online driver education show that there is no negative impact of online classes when compared to traditional classroom training.

An amendment has been proposed, which will delay implementation of this legislation until six months after the enactment of this bill. This amendment will allow schools and WisDOT more time to readily prepare for online driver education classes.

Thank you members, we ask for your support and would be more than happy to answer any questions.



Wisconsin Department of Transportation

www.dot.wisconsin.gov

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Secretary

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DATE: April 7, 2015

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs
The Honorable Jerry Petrowski, Chair

FROM: Nate Yahn, Legislative Advisor
Wisconsin Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 65 (online driver training instruction)

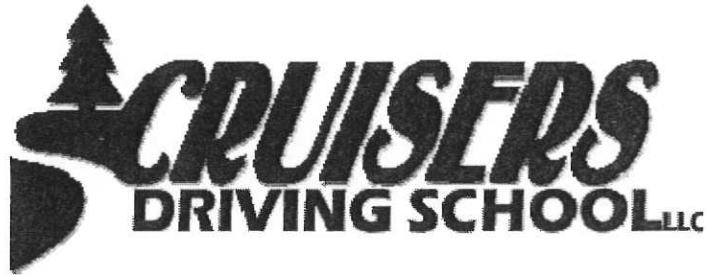
Chairman Petrowski and Committee Members:

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) would like to provide some important background information and commentary to committee members as you consider 2015 Wisconsin Senate Bill 65 (SB 65). SB 65 relates to online instruction provided by driver schools licensed by the Department of Transportation. The Department has no position on SB 65.

Under current law, private (for-profit) driver training schools (driver schools) and instructors are licensed and regulated by the department, and are required to provide instruction at a facility (classroom) used to conduct driver training. Driver education provided by public school districts, technical colleges and private high schools, however, is regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Current law allows for driver education programs approved through DPI to be provided online. SB 65 would allow driver schools regulated by WisDOT to also be able to provide instruction by means of the Internet (online). This instruction provided online could be instead of, or in addition to, providing driver instruction in a classroom.

If the provisions included in SB 65 were to become law, WisDOT would ensure that all of the existing driver education and curriculum requirements for driver schools that provide classroom instruction are maintained and established for the schools that provide driver instruction online. The department anticipates that the number of driver school applications requiring review and approval by DOT would increase as a result of this bill. DOT's Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will work with its stakeholder partners in making any necessary modifications to its existing manuals, procedures and administrative rules to ensure that the level of driver education being provided remains high.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (608) 266-1114.



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April 6, 2015

To: Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs.

RE: Senate Bill 65 Relating to Online Instruction for Classroom Drivers Education

I will not be able to attend the above referenced hearing. Please register me as being against the passing of Senate Bill 65.

Many topics can be taught successfully online with limited interaction/discussions between students and instructors. Drivers Education is not one of them. There is a reason only 12 % of states authorize it.

We offer drivers education services in small towns from Central to Northern Wisconsin. In most areas the public schools are no longer offering drivers education alternatives. Without Driver Training Schools, these students would not have options in their communities for training. Bill 65 will put many driving schools out of business and leave students in small communities without alternatives for Behind the Wheel Training. Once you allow out of state entities to offer internet classroom and start separating the profitable side of driver's education (classroom) from the more costly side (behind the wheel), profitability will end and driving schools will be forced out. This will leave students with limited or no resources to find Behind the Wheel providers to teach the second half of their training.

I read with interest the Wis. DOT's report on Exploring Pros and Cons of Online Driver Education. The study focused on online driver's education without an in-depth comparison with conventional DE. It also failed to address the availability of the students to obtain Behind the Wheel providers once they took their classroom online. Most students/parents choose online training for convenience. We find students will choose any other activity over their driver's education.

So why not turn on a computer and gather a group of friends who already went through their training to help you with the answers? Here's why:

Control

State law requires minors to have 30 hours of classroom training, over a minimum of three weeks, with no more than 2 hours per day. Breaks are not considered instruction time. Bill 65 has no requirement for an internet provider to build in the controls into their system to ensure that the statutes are met. A student can log in and leave the computer on and call it good.

When students are sitting in a classroom, the instructor is controlling their behavior while they are learning the topic. How do you keep a student's undivided attention when they are sitting at home in front of a computer? They will be multitasking on their cell phones, Facebooking and tweeting and putting forth the least amount of effort necessary to complete the task, many times with friends present.

Online providers may find a way to make sure the computer is logged in for the required time period and not idle, but this bill doesn't even address that. No matter what controls are added in, there is no way to control who is sitting in front of it operating it or if they are cheating.

Quality

Interaction with online training is limited and delayed. Students are much more likely to ask relevant timely questions when the instructor is face-to-face. In addition, students learn from the questions and answers presented in a classroom setting as well as testimonials of others.

In the classroom setting the instructor can gauge the level of understanding of a given topic and keep discussion relevant to local rules, regulations and traffic safety issues. They can also interject current events/news into the discussion.

Continuity Between Classroom & Behind the Wheel

If an instructor is first meeting a student behind the wheel of the car, they have no knowledge of the student's level of preparedness. The classroom environment allows the instructor to get to know the student and familiarizes them with the details of the entire program. If a student hasn't taken the classroom with you, the entire first driving lesson is spent sitting in one spot covering classroom material and no driving is taking place.

Students are taught different methods and terminologies by different programs. We get students that have transferred to us after taking online classroom. Most cannot tell you the basic fundamentals of who they can have in the car when they are driving with their Instruction Permit. They don't know the GDL passenger & time of day restrictions they will have on their probationary license for the 1st nine months; all critical to becoming a safe driver.

Cost:

Students will be paying twice for the same service amount of service. The classroom phase of DE is where most driving schools will make their profits. During classroom training you are providing group instruction with limited expenses. During the Behind the Wheel phase expenses are high and you are one-on-one with the instructor and student. We bundle the two services to share the expense/profit between the two. If Bill 65 passes, those businesses that are left will have to charge the same amount or more to provide half the service just to make the same profit.

I don't think Wisconsin should be one of a few to interject more technology and less safety into driving.

Sincerely,

Michele S. Kahle, Owner
Cruisers Driving School L.L.C.

Punches, Derek

From: wpdsa@new.rr.com
Sent: Monday, April 06, 2015 9:36 PM
To: Punches, Derek
Subject: SB65 Public Hearing on April 7, 2015

The following people and driving schools wish to register as being against 2015 Senate Bill 65:

Bruce Jacobs - Advantage Driving School

Rob Bullard - Osceola Driving School

Ryan Stair - FC Stair School of Driving

Steve Barnes - Chequamegon Bay Driving School

Phil & Sharon Wilson - Phils Driving School

Dorie Pederson - Safe Start Driving School

Stacy Severson - Rock Valley Driving School

Dave Henrichs - 1st Rate Driving School

Tim & Jane Eisenreich - Accurate Driving School

Bill Groves - Town & Country School of Driving

Avery Burton - Trinity Driving School

Tony Phillips - KC's Driving School

Nick Farfalla - American Certified Driving School

Robert Savitski - Drivers' Education of the Fox Cities

Steve Young - StartSmart Academy Driving School

Joy Tew - StartSmart Academy Driving School

Shawn Oleson - Preferred Driver Education

Steve & Chris Drella - 3D Driving School

Jennifer Martz - Roadrules Driving School

Frank Cerminara - 5 Star Driving School & L&B Driving School

Ed Wright - Panamerican Driving School

Grant Allen - Steer Right Driving Academy

Cecil Wold - Wold Driving School

Patrick Weidner - Weidner Driving School

Chuck Scott - Life on the Road Driving School

Lori Griesbach - L & M Drivers Education

Alan Musilek - Defensive Driving Specialists

John Walejewski - Blue Knight Driving School

Jan Slaght - Zimmerman Driving School

David Korth - Crossroads Drivers Education

Garry Sherwood - Accountable Driver Education

Michele Kahle - Cruisers Driving School

Robin Ferg - Ferg's Driving School

Sue Miller - Ferg's Driving School

Punches, Derek

From: wpdsa@new.rr.com
Sent: Tuesday, April 07, 2015 6:31 AM
To: Punches, Derek
Subject: SB65 Public Hearing on April 7, 2015

The following people and driving schools wish to register as being against 2015 Senate Bill 65 for the public hearing being held on April 7, 2015:

Peggy Olbrantz - Driver Education Specialists

James Fischer - A-Trident Drivers School

Kelly Hill - MJM Hill Driving School

Loren Homb - MJM Hill Driving School

Pamela Tourdot - MJM Hill Driving School

Thank you for your time with this matter.

Kris Engebretson
WPDSA Communications Office

Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs

To: Senator Jerry Petrowski, Chair
From: All-American Driver Training, Robert & Mary Kemp
Date: April 7, 2015
RE: SB 65 Online Classroom Driver Education

PROBLEM/SITUATION:

1. Wisconsin currently has Online Classroom DE, and has since 2004.
2. Wisconsin Technical Colleges, Cesa and Public High Schools continue to offer Online Classroom DE and have since 2004.
3. At our request, DOT set strict Standards/Requirements/Security for Online Classroom DE in 2007 for Commercial Driving Schools.
4. Our Online Course Curriculum meets or exceeds all of those requirements and has been approved for over a year.
5. Due to the lack of appropriate wording in the Statutes, Wisconsin Commercial Driving Schools are prohibited from offering Online Classroom DE as an option.
6. Some Commercial Driving Schools are forced to find alternative routes around this problem, and offer the Online Course, therefore confusing and compounding the situation.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Do nothing, thus allowing sporadic and questionable compliance and providing limited consequences due to lack of clarity in the Statutes.
2. Correct the Statutes as proposed in SB 65.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Only those in Fiscal Estimate attached to this Bill.
2. Commercial Driving Schools are self funding thus no financial impact other than FE.
3. Many States that have approved Online Classroom DE show an increase in employment for Commercial Schools, and also removes the financial burden from the Public Schools that opt to discontinue offering this non-academic course.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Approve the changes in the Statutes to allow all Wisconsin Approved Driving Schools, both Public and Private to offer, as an option, Online Classroom Driver Education. This would not change the In-Car, Behind The Wheel portion of Driver Education. Parent or Sponsor involvement would now become integral to the Classroom phase of training young drivers.
2. Studies by DOT and other agencies have found no difference in the educational quality between traditional classroom and Online classroom.
3. Over the last 11 years if inadequacies were found, and Online Classroom DE proved to have a negative impact on teen drivers, the courses would have been discontinued or prohibited for all.

Thank you for your consideration,

Respectfully submitted, Robert C. Kemp
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Wisconsin Driver Safety Through Education & Training