

111TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 734

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to study and establish a motor vehicle safety standard that provides for a means of alerting blind and other pedestrians of motor vehicle operation.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 28, 2009

Mr. TOWNS (for himself, Mr. BISHOP of Georgia, Mr. BOOZMAN, Mr. CARNAHAN, Mr. ELLISON, Mr. FILNER, Mr. HARE, Mr. HINCHEY, Mr. LATHAM, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. LOEBSACK, Mrs. MALONEY, Mr. McDERMOTT, Mr. PASTOR of Arizona, Mr. PRICE of North Carolina, Mr. RUPPERSBERGER, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. SERRANO, Mr. SESSIONS, Ms. SHEA-PORTER, Mr. STARK, Mr. STEARNS, Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ, Mr. WITTMAN, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Ms. BORDALLO, Mr. NADLER of New York, Ms. BERKLEY, Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida, Ms. HARMAN, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. MCINTYRE, Mr. COHEN, Mr. WALZ, and Mrs. LOWEY) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of Transportation to study and establish a motor vehicle safety standard that provides for a means of alerting blind and other pedestrians of motor vehicle operation.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Pedestrian Safety En-
3 hancement Act of 2009”.

4 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

5 As used in this Act—

6 (1) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary
7 of Transportation; and

8 (2) the term “motor vehicle” has the meaning
9 given such term in section 30102(a)(6) of title 49,
10 United States Code.

11 **SEC. 3. FINDINGS.**

12 Congress finds that—

13 (1) motor vehicles designed to provide the desir-
14 able benefits of reducing harmful pollutants and op-
15 erating with greater fuel efficiency include gasoline-
16 electric hybrid and electric-only vehicles, and in the
17 foreseeable future may include vehicles powered by
18 hydrogen fuel cell and other engine designs that rely
19 on fuels and technologies other than the gasoline-
20 powered internal combustion engine;

21 (2) these vehicle engine designs operate or are
22 likely to operate with virtually no sound being pro-
23 duced by the vehicle;

24 (3) the total number of hybrid motor vehicles
25 sold per year in the United States is growing dra-
26 matically, and may someday equal or exceed the

1 number of internal combustion engine motor vehicles
2 on the Nation's roads;

3 (4) blind pedestrians cannot locate and evaluate
4 traffic by sight and instead must listen to traffic to
5 discern its speed, direction, and other attributes in
6 order to travel safely and independently;

7 (5) other people, including pedestrians who are
8 not blind, bicyclists, runners, and small children,
9 benefit from multi-sensory information available
10 from vehicle traffic, including the sound of vehicle
11 engines;

12 (6) when operating on their electric engines, hy-
13 brid vehicles cannot be heard by blind people and
14 others, rendering such vehicles extremely dangerous
15 when driving on the street, emerging from drive-
16 ways, moving through parking lots, and in other sit-
17 uations where pedestrians and vehicles come into
18 proximity with each other;

19 (7) failure to take immediate action assuring
20 that blind pedestrians can hear hybrid and other si-
21 lent vehicles in all phases of their operation will in-
22 evitably lead to pedestrian injuries and fatalities;
23 and

24 (8) such accidents are preventable through vehi-
25 cle designs which take into account the multi-sen-

1 sory nature of traffic detection and avoidance, and
2 require that vehicles emit a minimum level of sound
3 designed to alert all pedestrians, especially blind pe-
4 destrians, to the presence of such vehicles.

5 **SEC. 4. STUDY OF METHOD TO PROTECT BLIND AND**
6 **OTHER PEDESTRIANS.**

7 (a) REQUIRED STUDY.—Not later than 90 days fol-
8 lowing enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall conduct
9 a study to—

10 (1) determine the most practical means of as-
11 suring that blind and other pedestrians receive sub-
12 stantially similar information to information such
13 pedestrians receive from sound emitted by vehicles
14 that use internal combustion engines;

15 (2) determine the minimum level of sound emit-
16 ted from a motor vehicle that is necessary to provide
17 blind pedestrians with the information needed to
18 make safe travel judgments; and

19 (3) consider whether the minimum level of
20 sound requirement or another method that conveys
21 information essential for pedestrian safety provides
22 the most reliable information to support safe travel
23 of blind and other pedestrians, including—

24 (A) which method provides blind and other
25 pedestrians the greatest amount of information

1 regarding location, motion, speed, and direction
2 of travel of a motor vehicle;

3 (B) the cost and feasibility of each method,
4 including the cost and feasibility of equipping
5 each individual pedestrian with any technology
6 necessary to receive information; and

7 (C) which method assures the least reli-
8 ance by blind and other pedestrians upon tech-
9 nology they must possess when traveling and
10 thereby provides the greatest amount of inde-
11 pendence and opportunity for spontaneous trav-
12 el for these pedestrians.

13 (b) REQUIRED CONSULTATION.—When conducting
14 the study, the Secretary shall—

15 (1) review all available research regarding the
16 effect of traffic sounds on pedestrian safety, and
17 commission such research as may be necessary;

18 (2) consult consumer groups representing indi-
19 viduals who are blind, other pedestrians, cyclists,
20 and advocates for children; and

21 (3) consult with automobile manufacturers and
22 professional organizations representing them.

23 (c) REPORT.—The Secretary shall complete the study
24 within 2 years of its commencement and shall transmit
25 a report of the findings to Congress.

1 **SEC. 5. MINIMUM SOUND REQUIREMENT FOR MOTOR VEHI-**
2 **CLES.**

3 Not later than 90 days after conclusion of the study
4 required under section 4, the Secretary shall promulgate
5 a motor vehicle safety standard under section 30111 of
6 title 49, United States Code, to establish a method for
7 alerting blind and other pedestrians of the presence and
8 operation of nearby motor vehicles to enable such pedes-
9 trians to travel safely and independently in urban, rural,
10 and residential environments. Such standard shall provide
11 that every motor vehicle be equipped with a method—

12 (1) to provide blind and other pedestrians with
13 a non-visual alert regarding the location, motion,
14 speed, and direction of travel of a motor vehicle that
15 provides substantially the same protection of such
16 pedestrians as that provided by a motor vehicle with
17 an internal combustion engine; and

18 (2) that will permit a blind or other pedestrian
19 to determine the location, motion, speed, and direc-
20 tion of travel of a motor vehicle with substantially
21 the same degree of certainty as such pedestrians are
22 able to determine the location, motion, speed, and
23 direction of travel of a motor vehicle with an inter-
24 nal combustion engine.

1 **SEC. 6. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

2 There is authorized to be appropriated to the Sec-
3 retary of Transportation such sums as may be necessary
4 to carry out this Act.

5 **SEC. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

6 The standard promulgated under section 5 shall
7 apply to all new motor vehicles manufactured or sold in
8 the United States beginning on that date that is 2 years
9 after the issuance of such standard.

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