



Kansas Sheriffs Association

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Sheriff Sandy Horton, Executive Director

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House Transportation Committee
Supporting Testimony for HB2157

Chairman Proehl and Committee Members,

In early 2008 Dave Corp with the Kansas Traffic Safety Office met with me regarding the low seatbelt compliance rate for Crawford County. At the time I was Sheriff of Crawford County and surprised to hear we had the lowest compliance rate of 53% overall and only 61% of teen drivers buckling up. This information came from traffic surveys conducted in 20 of the most populated counties in Kansas.

From that conversation and idea was born and after several meetings with School Administrators and students SAFE (Seatbelts Are For Everyone) was created in all six of the Crawford County high schools serving 1,280 students.

Students quickly bought into the program and essentially built SAFE from the ground up including picking out the name. The pledge card used now statewide, with 260,700 cards printed annually, was actually designed by a Pittsburg High School student. They were soon taught how to take the seatbelt survey from the school parking lot and present safety messages to the student body.

SAFE comprises of three phases with the first being the Education Phase, second is the Incentive Phase and last is the Enforcement Phase. During the Education Phase students not only take the surveys but usually school assemblies are conducted with the convincer brought into the school simulating a 6 mile crash along with other safety messages presented. Students are then asked if they want to sign one of the Pledge Cards.

If that student signs a Pledge Card then he/she becomes eligible for a drawing that could include a VISA card which is the Incentive Phase of SAFE.

The Enforcement Phase consist of local and county law enforcement officers along with the Kansas Highway Patrol conducting traffic stops in the school area and enforcing the seatbelt laws.

In 2012, my last year as Sheriff before retiring and continuing in my position of Executive Director of the Kansas Sheriffs Association, the teen seatbelt compliance rate in Crawford County had increased to 88%. There were 33 rollover accidents that year involving teen drivers and passengers. Of those 33 only 3 were unbuckled with only 1 reportable injury. There have been NO FATALITES involving teens in Crawford County since introducing SAFE in 2008.

Since starting SAFE Kansas teen seatbelt use has increased by 22% and the trend of unbelted fatalities in Kansas has continued to decrease. SAFE is now in 118 schools in 54 counties and reaches out to approximately 43,450 students.

In 2014 The Kansas Sheriffs Association (KSA) adopted SAFE as one of its public safety initiatives. Sheriffs who participated in the SAFE program in their county were offered a \$200 grant to help in funding the Incentive Phase. Forty three Sheriff's participated and KSA provided \$8,600 in funding.

However, SAFE needs a continuous funding source and expansion Statewide if we are truly going to see a difference in teen safety and that is why the Kansas Sheriffs Association supports this legislative effort.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheriff Sandy Horton, Retired
Executive Director
Kansas Sheriffs Association