

(S.B. 800)

(No. 147)

(Approved December 12, 2005)

AN ACT

To direct the Department of Transportation and Public Works and the Highways and Transportation Authority of Puerto Rico to establish and execute, in coordination with the Commission for Traffic Safety, a plan for posting signs along all expressways and primary highways of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, indicating that all drivers and passengers of a motor vehicle must have their safety belt fastened, excepting the provisions of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Vehicle and Traffic Act,” in order to foster traffic safety.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Vehicle and Traffic Act,” establishes orderly and efficient vehicle and traffic regulations that respond to the needs of the citizens and strengthen public safety. Chapter XII of the aforesaid Act provides the standards relative to the use of safety belts by the drivers and passengers of the motor vehicles that travel along the public highways of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. It also establishes that every occupant of a motor vehicle that fails to fasten his/her safety belt shall be fined fifty dollars.

It has been proven that when a car has a collision or brakes suddenly, it stops immediately but the driver continues to move forward until he/she is

stopped by the windshield, the instrument panel or the pavement. Fastening the safety belt prevents the body from bouncing around in or being thrown out of the car. Thus, the safety belt reduces the possibility of having the drivers and passengers suffering injuries since it keeps them firmly bound to the seat. It has also been indicated that the air bags found in the front part of a motor vehicle that fill with air when a frontal collision occurs are more efficient when the person's safety belt is fastened.

The Commission for Traffic Safety, created by Act No. 33 of May 25, 1972, as amended, establishes a traffic prevention program in coordination with the various agencies, instrumentalities, public corporations and municipalities which by law are responsible for conducting some phase of those matters related to traffic. According to data submitted by the Executive Director of the Commission for Traffic Safety, a significant increase in the use of the safety belt has been achieved. At present, 91 percent of the drivers and passengers in Puerto Rico use the latter. However, the official statistics regarding deaths by traffic accidents corresponding to the year 2004 indicate that 495 persons died, of which 261 were occupants of the vehicle and that 40 percent of these did not use the safety belt.

The information provided by the Trauma Division of the Medical Services Administration indicates that for the year 2004, the average cost for the medical attention given to a patient traveling in a motor vehicle without a seat belt was 30,702 dollars.

The speed allowed in the expressways is greater than the speed allowed in any other public highway of the Island. Thus, the greatest number of traffic accidents occurs in said public highways, making it indispensable to orient drivers and passengers and remind them that they must use the safety belt. To such effects, this Legislature believes it meritorious to carry

out a plan to post signs along all the expressways of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico as a reminder to all citizens that travel through these that they, the drivers as well as the passengers, must use the safety belt at all times, excepting those cases established in Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Vehicle and Traffic Act.”

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.-To direct the Department of Transportation and Public Works and the Highways and Transportation Authority of Puerto Rico to establish and execute, in coordination with the Commission for Traffic Safety, a plan for posting signs indicating that every driver and passenger of a motor vehicle must use a safety belt and that they post, within a term of not more than one (1) year, said signs in all expressways and primary state highways of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Section 2.-The Commission for Traffic Safety shall offer its collaboration, experience and knowledge as to how to carry out the posting of said signs about the use of the safety belt by every driver and passenger of a motor vehicle, in order to comply with the objectives of this Act.

Section 3.-The Department of Transportation and Public Works and the Highways and Transportation Authority of Puerto Rico are hereby authorized to receive, petition and administer Commonwealth, federal municipal and private funds to comply with the objectives of this Act.

Section 4.-This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following Act No. 147 (S.B. 800) of the 2nd Session of the 15th Legislature of Puerto Rico:

AN ACT to direct the Department of Transportation and Public Works and the Highways and Transportation Authority of Puerto Rico to establish and execute, in coordination with the Commission for Traffic Safety, a plan for posting signs along all expressways and primary highways of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, indicating that all drivers and passengers of a motor vehicle must have their safety belt fastened, excepting the provisions of Act No. 22 of January 7, 2000, as amended, known as the “Puerto Rico Vehicle and Traffic Act,” in order to foster traffic safety,

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, today 1st of March of 2006.

Francisco J. Domenech
Director