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Seat belts for Buses

In the state of Nebraska, all people are required to wear their seat belts whenever they are in a moving vehicle, or they could get a traffic citation. However, buses are the exception to this rule. Why is the state of Nebraska allowing young children and adults to put their lives at risk in this situation by not having seat belts available to them? All bus companies and schools need to be required to add seat belts to their buses for the safety of people.

Buses are already built to be safe because of their compartmentalization feature, which requires seats to be spaced closely together and have high backs. But if a bus would get in a crash, what would stop the passengers from being thrown out of the bus? The answer is nothing. When buses get in bad crashes and passengers are thrown from the vehicle, there are often fatalities and many injuries. On average, 21 large bus occupants are killed every year, and 7,934 are injured. Studies show that adding seat belts to large buses could reduce fatalities by up to 44% and severe injuries by up to 45% (“2013 Federal Ruling”). These are striking percentages which show that seat belts could make a big impact in keeping bus-riders safer.

Recently, there was a crash in Northern California between a FedEx freight truck and a charter bus that ended in the death of ten people, most of them young adults going on a college visit (Megerian, Mason, and Branson-Potts). Since their deaths were caused by being ejected from the bus, if there would have been a law requiring seat belts, more of these adolescents may have been prevented from being killed in the crash. There are some states that require all moving vehicles to have safety restraints: Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York, and Texas (Kim). However, this is only five of fifty states, and it would be good for other states to enact a seat belt law for buses as well, to ensure that accidents like the one that occurred in California doesn’t happen again.

Some critics of buses having seat belts argue that children will not know how to use seat belts. In this day and age, seat belts are common practice for most kids. Children are required to wear them when they are in a family vehicle or smaller school vehicle, which means that they would be able to use them properly on a bus as well. School administrators also argue that safety restraints would cost the school a lot of money, but some states, like Connecticut, are proposing to give money to add safety restraints (Kim).

This may also be the case for tour bus companies. They do not want to spend the extra money putting safety features on their buses. However, there is a new law that may be passed to require seat belts on all new coach buses starting in 2016 (Lowy). Seat belts would only add about $3,000 to the price of a new motor coach, a price well within many companies’ budgets (Lowy). But adding seat belts to existing buses would be a bit more expensive, costing about $40,000. Nevertheless, the government needs to require older buses to have seat belts put in because these older buses will continue to be used for 15-20 years after they have been purchased (Kim). The government could give grants to companies and schools to help pay for these expenses.

The conflict over whether seat belts should be added to buses is controversial. People opposed to the idea believe adding seat belts will cost too much money, but all bus companies and schools need to be required to add seat belts to their buses for the safety of people. People’s lives are invaluable, and keeping them safe should be everyone’s priority.

Works Cited

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