

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 2362
House Transportation Committee
March 9, 2023

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. My name is Carol Meidinger. I am retired from the ND Department of Health where I served as the Director of the Injury Prevention Program for many years. I was involved in the original passage, referral and initiated measure related to North Dakota's safety belt law. Every session when this bill is brought before your committee, I listen to the testimony from both sides and am astonished at the misinformation that is presented to the committee from those in opposition. **Here are the facts:**

- A **primary enforcement** seat belt was passed in 1989. The seat belt law was referred to the voters and placed on a December 5 special election ballot. Seven other measures were also on the ballot, including allowing legislators to participate in PERS, electronic video gaming, comprehensive school health and multiple tax increases. The voters were in an ugly mood and every measure was rejected. To my knowledge, since 1989, many of these same issues have come before the Legislature and have been approved. So the fact that it was voted down 34 years ago should NOT be a consideration! I have heard testimony that North Dakotans have voted down the primary seat belt law over and over. A primary law has been on the ballot once.
- In 1993, the ND Legislature passed the seat belt law with a secondary provision. Opponents again gathered signatures to refer the law to a vote. In June 1994, the law was approved on a vote of 51.9 percent for and 48.1 percent opposed.
- Opponents then decided to use the initiated measure process to place the law on another ballot. In November 1994, the law was upheld with 56.4 percent voting to keep it.

I am no longer involved in occupant protection issues, but as a taxpaying citizen, I believe it's time to put this issue to rest. There is no valid reason for not changing this law to allow for primary enforcement, to align with other traffic safety laws. It amazes me that state agencies, law enforcement, health and medical personnel and other safety advocates have to come to the Legislature every session to beg for something they know will improve the health and safety of their constituents. It's time!