

Chairman Clemens and members of the Senate
Transportation Committee,

My name is Dean Rummel, Senator from District 37.

Senate Bill 2362 does not represent a new law, it changes existing ND law as follows:

1. Changes the enforcement from secondary to primary.
2. Changes the requirement for seat belt use from front seat occupants to all occupants.

ND law already has primary enforcement of restraint use for minors under the age of 18. The fine for a violation with this bill remains the same at \$20.

The debate over “personal choice” to not wear a seat belt and the actual “privilege” to drive has been going on for many years. It is comparable to previous debates on wearing blaze orange while hunting in North Dakota or for wearing a personal floatation device when on a personal water craft. Fines for both these violations is \$25.

Safety belts, blaze orange and personal floatation devices save lives. You have heard and will hear many of the statistics that prove that safety belts save lives. What I intend to share with you is some life experiences. We all

have those life experiences that mold who you are and your opinion on subjects like safety belts.

My parents owned an auto salvage yard for nearly 60 years. Since we needed tow trucks anyway, we were in the towing business. Dad had free labor so in our early teens we would have to help him at nights and on weekends when the tow trucks where called out to crashes. We saw many crashes some with fatalities, those you never seem to forget. My father was on the Dickinson Rural Fire Department and was Chief for many years. With his experience he started the Dickinson Rural Rescue Squad. I was 18 when I joined the fire department and rescue squad. I helped him write grants for extraction equipment called the “jaws of life.” Dickinson was one of the first in the State to have that equipment. Since we had an unlimited amount of wrecked vehicles, we were able to train many first responders in western ND.

After spending many years being exposed to numerous crashes I have an opinion about the rights of ambulance drivers, EMT’s, firefighters, peace officers, rescue squad members, emergency room nurses and doctors and families of victims.

Yes, it is their job to help people. But we have the ability to reduce the number of deaths and injuries they need to deal with.

From personal experience I want to inform you about roll-over crashes. The chances of being killed is four times greater if you are thrown or partially ejected from a vehicle. My wife and middle son had just delivered some furniture to our youngest son who was attending NDSU. Coming out of Fargo on a cold, clear day she hit a patch of black ice and rolled the pickup into the median. The windows blew out, both of them were wearing their seat belts and they stayed securely in the vehicle. Thankfully neither one of them were injured. I believe the outcome would have been much different if they were not wearing their seat belts.

We already have a majority of North Dakotans that favor seat belts since 8 out of 10 wear a seat belt when driving or riding in a motor vehicle. With a primary seat belt law, more people would wear seat belts. Seat belts save lives and it is the single most effective safety device.

Since we are tasked with determining if any bill will impact our workforce, I can safely say this bill certainly will. I would stand for any questions.