

SENATE BILL 276

R2

8lr1590

By: **Senators Stone, Colburn, Conway, Dyson, Haines, Klausmeier, Kramer, McFadden, Munson, Peters, and Raskin**

Introduced and read first time: January 25, 2008

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

Maryland Quiet Vehicles and Pedestrian Safety Task Force

3 FOR the purpose of establishing a Maryland Quiet Vehicles and Pedestrian Safety
4 Task Force; providing for the membership and duties of the Task Force;
5 providing for the staffing of the Task Force; prohibiting a member of the Task
6 Force from receiving certain compensation; authorizing a member of the Task
7 Force to receive reimbursement for certain expenses; requiring the Task Force
8 to report to the General Assembly by a certain date; providing for the
9 termination of this Act; and generally relating to the establishment of a
10 Maryland Quiet Vehicles and Pedestrian Safety Task Force.

Preamble

12 WHEREAS, It is a high priority of this State that the public streets and
13 highways be safe and navigable by both vehicular and pedestrian traffic; and

14 WHEREAS, Vehicles designed to provide the desirable benefits of reducing
15 harmful pollutants and operating with greater fuel efficiency, including
16 gasoline-electric hybrid and electric-only vehicles, and in the future, other vehicles
17 that rely on fuels and technologies other than the gasoline internal combustion engine,
18 which operate or are likely to operate virtually soundlessly; and

19 WHEREAS, The Maryland Clean Cars Act of 2007, which requires that by 2011
20 a certain percentage of the vehicles sold in this State be vehicles that produce lower
21 emissions, will increase the number of hybrid vehicles and other vehicles using
22 technologies other than the gasoline internal combustion engine on the highways of
23 this State; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 WHEREAS, Because blind pedestrians cannot locate and evaluate traffic using
2 their vision, they must listen to traffic to discern its speed, direction, and other
3 attributes in order to travel safely and independently; and

4 WHEREAS, Pedestrians, cyclists, runners, and small children who are not blind
5 benefit from the multisensory information available from vehicle traffic, including the
6 sound of vehicle engines; and

7 WHEREAS, Preliminary research conducted by the National Federation of the
8 Blind, the nation's oldest and largest organization of blind people and the largest
9 organized group of blind people in Maryland, indicates that when operating on electric
10 power, hybrid vehicles cannot be heard by blind people and others and are, therefore,
11 extremely dangerous when driving on the street, emerging from driveways, moving
12 through parking lots, and in other situations where pedestrians and vehicles come in
13 close proximity to one another; and

14 WHEREAS, Failure of this State to take immediate action to ensure that blind
15 pedestrians can hear vehicles in all phases of operation is likely to lead to pedestrian
16 injuries and fatalities; and

17 WHEREAS, Injuries and fatalities may be prevented through vehicle designs
18 that take into account the multisensory nature of traffic detection and a requirement
19 that vehicles emit a minimum level of sound in order to alert all pedestrians, and
20 especially blind pedestrians, to their presence; now, therefore,

21 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
22 MARYLAND, That:

23 (a) There is a Maryland Quiet Vehicles and Pedestrian Safety Task Force.

24 (b) The Task Force consists of the following members, appointed by the
25 Governor in consultation with the Secretary of Transportation:

26 (1) one representative from the Department of Transportation;

27 (2) one representative from the Department of the Environment;

28 (3) two or three individuals who:

29 (i) represent the organized blind community in this State;

30 (ii) are legally blind; and

31 (iii) have experience or expertise in training blind people to
32 travel safely and independently;

33 (4) two or three individuals representing pedestrian organizations in
34 this State; and

(5) one representative of an organization representing the interests of
automobile manufacturers.

3 (c) The Governor shall appoint a chair of the Task Force from its
4 membership.

5 (d) The Secretary of Transportation shall provide staff support for the Task
6 Force from the Department of Transportation.

7 (e) A member of the Task Force:

8 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

11 (f) The Task Force shall:

12 (1) study the effects of vehicle sound on pedestrian safety;

13 (2) review all available research regarding the effects of vehicle sound
14 on pedestrian safety;

15 (3) consult with:

16 (i) consumer groups representing individuals who are blind,
17 other pedestrians, and cyclists; and

18 (ii) advocates for the safety of children;

19 (4) as appropriate, contract for additional research and studies to be
20 conducted;

21 (5) conduct hearings to accept testimony from:

22 (i) experts on acoustics, automobile design, environmental
23 quality, orientation and mobility for blind people, pedestrian safety, and other
24 relevant fields; and

25 (ii) interested members of the public; and

26 (6) make recommendations concerning a minimum sound level and
27 the nature and characteristics of the minimum sound to be required for all new
28 vehicles sold and licensed in the State.

4 (h) On or before December 31, 2008, the Task Force shall report its findings
5 and recommendations to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the
6 State Government Article.

7 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
8 June 1, 2008. It shall remain effective for a period of 7 months and, at the end of
9 December 31, 2008, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act
10 shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.