

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

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 19, 2008

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **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.

11 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

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike-out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 technologies other than the gasoline internal combustion engine on the highways of
2 this State; and

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

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

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

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

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

23 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
24 MARYLAND, That:

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

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

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

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

30 (3) two or three individuals who:

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

32 (ii) are legally blind; and

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

1 (4) two or three individuals representing pedestrian organizations in
2 this State; and

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

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

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

9 (e) A member of the Task Force:

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

11 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard
12 State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

13 (f) The Task Force shall:

14 (1) study:

15 (i) the effects of vehicle sound on pedestrian safety; and

16 (ii) all available technology that may enhance the safety of blind
17 pedestrians;

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

20 (3) consult with:

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

23 (ii) advocates for the safety of children;

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

26 (5) conduct hearings to accept testimony from:

27 (i) experts on acoustics, automobile design, environmental
28 quality, orientation and mobility for blind people, pedestrian safety, and other
29 relevant fields; and

1 (ii) interested members of the public; and

2 (6) make recommendations concerning:

3 (i) a minimum sound level and the nature and characteristics
4 of the minimum sound to be required for all new vehicles sold and licensed in the
5 State; and

6 (ii) the use of technology to enhance the safety of blind
7 pedestrians.

8 (g) The Task Force is not required to specify the method or technology
9 through which automobile manufacturers must implement the recommended sound
10 standard.

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

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

Approved:

Governor.

President of the Senate.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.