



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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VEHICLE HEADLIGHT USE

**Senate Bill 42 (Substitute H-2)
First Analysis (6-10-87)**

**Sponsor: Sen. Gilbert Dinello
Senate Committee: State Affairs, Tourism, and
Transportation
House Committee: Transportation**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Michigan motorists are required by law to use the headlights on their vehicles during non-daylight hours of driving and at other times when there is not sufficient light to clearly see people and vehicles at a distance of 500 feet. Sometimes during daylight hours, however, rain, snow, or other inclement weather conditions can create a serious visibility problem for drivers. Some people maintain that this potentially hazardous situation could be alleviated to a degree if motorists used their headlights when these conditions existed, to help make their presence known to other drivers.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to require drivers to use headlights when the weather is so inclement as to obscure vision and require the use of windshield wipers. Points would not be assessed on the driver's license for a violation.

MCL 257.684

HOUSE COMMITTEE ACTION:

The House Transportation Committee adopted a substitute which incorporated two technical amendments.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the Department of State Police, the bill has no fiscal implications. (6-4-87)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Severe weather conditions can reduce drivers' visibility, putting themselves and others at risk. Currently, there is no law to mandate the use of lights, no matter how hard it may be raining or snowing. The bill would increase awareness and use of vehicle lights and lamps in these dangerous situations.

Against:

While driving with headlights on during inclement weather may increase the ability of others to see a driver's vehicle, it sometimes actually impairs the driver's own vision, especially in snowy or foggy conditions. The bill, however, would make it illegal for a driver not to use his or her lights at times when, in the interest of safety and visibility, leaving the vehicles lights off would be more prudent.

Against:

By specifying that headlights must be turned on when the weather is such that windshield wipers are being used, the bill would exclude motorcycles, which are not required to be equipped with windshield wipers.

POSITIONS:

The Department of State Police has no position on the bill. (6-4-87)

S.B. 42 (6-10-87)