

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE
PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

HB562 - PN589

by

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Butler County State Inspection Association

Honorable Members of the House Transportation Committee

I represent the Butler County Inspection Association as well as myself, Kenneth M. Boice, an independent garage owner and operator. Included with the copy of this speech, you have received a copy of a petition of opposition to the bill HB562; once a year inspection program.

In your minds I know that you are asking, why is this man and his Association opposed to a bill which would cost the public more money and put more money in his own pocket.

First of all gentlemen, we are concerned with the safety of our customers. Your administration states that we now have longer lasting brakes and front end parts. I do not believe this to be so. Brakes purchased within the past year are only about one-half as thick as before. Recently, I bought a set of new Raylor, not relined, brakes. The owner of the vehicle was a salesman for an auto parts center. The shoes were riveted lining and had 3/32nds lining above the rivets. Keep in mind they need 1/32nd to pass inspection. Taking the old time percentage inspection gage, you would get a 60% reading. We concluded that the brakes were just a defective set. We went to his store and checked fifteen sets at random. We found one set with only 2/32nds, two sets with 4/32nds, and the rest had 3/32nds. It is obvious that these are not of better materials, they are just another cost saving device for the consumer.

Regarding the front end parts, on 50 to 60% of the replacement parts it is no longer possible to lube them, because they do not have grease fittings. This is fine as long as the salt and stones don't puncture the rubber grease retainer and drain out the grease.

During the May, June, July, 1980 inspection campaign I inspected 215 cars in my rural shop. The manufactured year of these cars ranged from 1959 thru 1980, with the average year of 1975. The total cost of inspection on these 215 cars was \$5411.75, or \$25.17 per car for a six month sticker. The average mileage driven between inspections was 5700 miles. Keep in mind this \$25.17 per car was only for the work I did. About 30% of my customers take the car home, do the work themselves and then bring it back for a sticker.

May, June, July 1981, again, for 215 cars the year of manufacture was from 1966 thru 1981; the average 1974. The total cost was \$6281.72, or \$29.22 per car. The average mileage drives between inspections was 4200 miles.

Right now, in our area, we have about 10% unemployment. I feel that this factor combined with the cost of gasoline is what makes the difference in the mileage driven between 1980 and 1981. Also, note that the average year of manufacture went down one year and the miles driven decreased in 1981. The average cost of inspection per car went up \$4.05, meaning people are keeping and repairing their older cars. I also found from my records that 33% of the 215 cars, each six month period, needed repairs to pass inspection. Therefore, if we go to a once a year inspection, 33% of the cars will need repairs after six months, but still be permitted to drive an additional six months in an unsafe condition. If these cars are allowed to be driven for the additional six months with one or more unsafe parts; at the time of the next inspection the cars will need more repairs at a greater cost to the consumer.

The administration claims that a once a year inspection will save the consumer 61 million dollars. We feel that from our records and experience that it would cost the public at least that much additional instead of saving it. We could not get any of the auto parts stores to sign our petition or back us in any way. That tells us all something.

The OBA report states that Pennsylvania is having as many or more accidents than some states with the once a year inspection, or no inspection at all. If this is so, why did we just spend so much money on the Green Tree Hill runaway ramp to protect Pittsburgh from the bad condition of these out of state trucks. One thing sure contradicts the other.

Our association feels that our present state inspection laws are good except for a few minor things. The main issue being that PennDot and the state police are not enforcing the code. We in Butler County have one of the best state police inspection officers you can find, but he can't do it all. He has 357 inspection stations to check on. In addition he has all school buses to personally inspect, he takes phone calls at the barracks for one hour each morning and one hour each afternoon, not leaving him much time on the road. He also has to locate stolen stickers and bad inspections. He visits each garage only once a year to review our books. Remember out of the 357 stations, 90% are independent garages and 50% of those are in the country. Also keep in mind that the customers at these country garages have larger repair bills because of the condition of the roads.

As you know, PennDot has a system we must follow on the rejection of a car for inspection. The new campaign just begun on August 1st. Let's say, the sticker on your car is still good till October 31st, but you come into my shop for inspection today. I find one bald tire, one bad tie rod end and the front disc brakes are completely gone. I fill out a rejection slip, (3 copies), I send one to the Department today, at a cost of 18¢ to me, keep a copy for my file, and give you, the customer, the third copy. Your copy state that you must have the work done within five days or pull the car off the road. If you get the work done; and inspection mechanic signs your copy and you mail it to the department. Or you could be the person who gets busy, forgets to get your car repaired and keep driving till October 31st in a very unsafe car. PennDot is not and has not followed up on these rejections for a long time. I proved this myself, because two years ago I rejected my wifes car, on purpose, and still I have not heard a word about it. Concerning this, we would like to offer a suggestion. When a car comes in for inspection, the first thing to do is take off the old sticker. Inspect the car, if it passes put a new sticker on it, if not then put a special 5 day sticker with a big R on it. This sign of rejection will help stop a lot of the unsafe vehicles on the road.

Our association, and I personally, would welcome your committee to be present in my shop on any one day the last week of an inspection campaign, to see the cars that come in for inspection. Cars that I inspected just six to nine months previous, and cars that someone just hung paper on the last inspection. Gentlemen, if you would see this, I'm convinced you would fight to keep our twice a year inspection.

In conclusion, as a business man, I could use the old television commercial. Pay me a little bit now, or pay me a lot once a year, but please do not approve HB562. The life you save may be your own, or one of your family, or friends.

Thank you.