

More states are talking about having seat belts on school buses

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Students watch a police officer investigate their school bus that collided with another bus on January 26, 2017, in Wichita, Kansas. According to police, 27 children suffered minor injuries. Legislative momentum in a number of states is building behind seat belt requirements on school buses. Photo from Travis Heying/Wichita Eagle/TNS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Dawn Prescott and her son Benjamin went on a school trip together. Benjamin was 14 years old. He was in the high school band. Dawn was a parent chaperone on the trip. They were riding on a school bus.

Sadly, the bus crashed. Benjamin was killed. Three other people died, too. Many more riders were hurt. The bus driver was also hurt. The driver was the only one wearing a seat belt.

There was no law that said school buses should have seat belts. So, the bus did not have any for the riders.

The crash was more than 15 years ago. It was in Omaha, Nebraska.

Mom Takes Action

Since then, Dawn has wanted Nebraska to have a new law. She wants school buses to have seat belts for their riders. So far, this has not happened.

Nebraska and other states are considering making this a law. Some people think states should. They say children will be safer.

Others think seat belts will not help that much. They also cost a lot of money. It would be thousands of dollars to put seat belts on each new bus. It would cost even more to add seat belts to buses already being used.

States would have to spend many millions of dollars to put seat belts on all their school buses.

Buses Have Built-In Protection

The buses themselves are already designed to protect riders. Even without seat belts, the children are kept snug. They are like eggs in a carton, sitting close together.

Only six states have laws requiring seat belts on school buses. They are California, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York and Texas.

School buses are the safest way to move students around. Every day millions of children ride school buses. Deaths from school bus crashes are very rare.

Still, some people worry that children are not protected enough. Children could fall out of their seats in a crash. This is why they need seat belts.

Not All Agree Over Seat Belts

Other people disagree. The seat belts could be hard to unbuckle in an emergency.

Dawn Prescott has her mind made up. The Nebraska mother who lost her son wants seat belts on school buses.

"If my son had a seat belt on, he would be here today," Prescott said.

Quiz

- 1 Which sentence from the section "Buses Have Built-In Protection" BEST explains why many parents think there should be seat belts on all school buses?
- (A) The buses themselves are already designed to protect riders.
 - (B) School buses are the safest way to move students around.
 - (C) Deaths from school bus crashes are very rare.
 - (D) Children could fall out of their seats in a crash.
- 2 Which paragraph from the section "Mom Takes Action" gives the MOST examples of why some people do not support adding seat belts to school buses?
- 3 Which answer choice is a section title?
- (A) WASHINGTON, D.C.
 - (B) It was in Omaha, Nebraska.
 - (C) "Buses Have Built-In Protection"
 - (D) "More states are talking about having seat belts on school buses"
- 4 What is the purpose of the last section, "Not All Agree Over Seat Belts"?
- (A) to explain how Prescott plans to convince schools to add seat belts to buses
 - (B) to show the different opinions about adding seat belts to buses
 - (C) to explain what kinds of emergencies can happen on school buses
 - (D) to show how often school buses get into accidents