

SENATE BILL No. 295

By Committee on Ways and Means

3-2

9 AN ACT concerning blind and visually impaired persons; establishing the
10 motor vehicle and safe mobility committee; powers and duties thereof.

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12 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Kansas:*

13 Section 1. The legislature finds and declares all of the following:

14 (a) Technological advances in motor vehicle fuel efficiency have led to
15 the increased popularity of alternative fuel motorized road vehicles, such
16 as hybrid and electric vehicles and quiet roadway and tire technologies.
17 These new technologies are changing the way pedestrians, especially the
18 blind and visually impaired, utilize audible cues to cross streets and move
19 through traffic. The engines in these vehicles operate with significantly
20 less sound than the traditional combustion engine, resulting in a reduction
21 of the warning time that blind or visually impaired pedestrians have to
22 get across an intersection. This is a threat to the ability of the blind or
23 visually impaired pedestrians to move with independence and safety.

24 (b) When vision, as a means of understanding and interpreting the
25 environment, is reduced or completely eliminated, hearing takes over as
26 the main information channel. Those who are blind or visually impaired
27 have learned to rely on hearing to judge when it is safe to cross the street.
28 Hearing also helps them verify that such blind or visually impaired pe-
29 destrians are within a crosswalk, following a straight pathway and not
30 veering into a parking lot or other hazardous vehicular areas.

31 (c) Traffic is a primary source of auditory information. The sounds of
32 traffic give the blind or visually impaired pedestrians information about
33 location, direction and flow which enables them to determine when they
34 can safely cross a street. Such sounds allow the blind or visually impaired
35 pedestrians to determine the geometric shape of an intersection and the
36 presence of approaching vehicles. When there is silence, it is interpreted
37 as a quiet time to safely cross an intersection.

38 (d) Anecdotal reports of pedestrians who are blind or visually im-
39 paired indicate that these environmentally friendly vehicles are extremely
40 difficult and often impossible to hear.

41 Sec. 2. (a) The department of transportation shall establish a quiet
42 motor vehicle and safe mobility committee composed of representatives
43 from vehicle manufacturers, the blind or visually impaired pedestrian

1 community, insurance industry, vehicle research entities and law enforce-
2 ment organizations.

3 (b) Such committee shall research, identify and make recommenda-
4 tions to the department of transportation concerning strategies to ensure
5 that all motor vehicles, regardless of engine type or configuration, emit
6 sound sufficient to be heard and localized by pedestrians, including those
7 who are blind or visually impaired.

8 (c) The department of transportation shall propose recommendations
9 for legislation to insure that alternative fuel motor vehicles, such as hybrid
10 and electric vehicles, licensed in Kansas, are fitted with sound making
11 devices which shall, as a default, and without motorist activation, emit
12 sound sufficient to be heard and localized by pedestrians, including those
13 who are blind and visually impaired. Such committee shall submit a report
14 to the department of transportation and the department of transportation
15 shall offer recommendations for implementing legislation to the senate
16 committee on transportation and the house of representatives committee
17 on transportation on or before the first day of the 2011 regular session of
18 the Kansas legislature.

19 (d) The motor vehicle and safety mobility committee shall be and is
20 hereby abolished on December 31, 2010.

21 Sec. 3. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its
22 publication in the statute book.