

[bwilson4web](#)

Senior Member

Silence is assent — HR 5734

Hi folks,

If you don't let your congress critters know what you think about the “Bell the Hybrid” act, HR 5734, you have no one to blame when noise makers are added to our cars. As we've pointed out, the bill as written all but excludes any technology other than noise makers put on our hybrid cars. It means noise, not “smart highway” technology will be used so our hybrids will be just as lethal as the existing cars and trucks that killed 5,000 pedestrians and cyclists each year.

The bill continues to sit on the committee agenda:

[H.R. 5734: Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act of 2008 \(GovTrack.us\)](#)

<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-5734>

This bill is badly written and full of factual errors but if you don't let your local Congressman and Senators know your opinions, your silence is assent to what it calls out for. If like some of us, you've already contacted your congress critters, THANKS! If not, educate them so this bill can get fixed.

There is a real problem, 5,000 pedestrians and cyclists killed per year but putting a “bell on the hybrids” only makes them just as deadly as the current cars and trucks.

Thanks,

Bob Wilson

[chogan2](#)

Senior Member

Re: Silence is assent — HR 5734

Quote:

Originally Posted by **bwilson4web**
*Hi folks,
If you don't let your congress critters know what you think about the "Bell the Hybrid" act, HR 5734, you have no one to blame when noise makers are added to our cars....*

For those of you who have never done this, it's incredibly easy to send an email to your representative. If you wish to send an email, go to [United States House of Representatives, 110th Congress, 2nd Session http://www.house.gov/](http://www.house.gov/), type in your ZIP+4 (or ZIP and they'll help you find the +4) to find your representatives site, and follow the links under "contact" to find the email page.

The subject line should mention the bill:

HR 5734: Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act of 2008

Here's what I sent to Tom Davis (R, VA):

Dear Congressman Davis:

A bill has been introduced in the House Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection, that would mandate putting noisemakers on hybrid cars (and possibly on other quiet vehicles), based on the assumption that these cars are so quiet they are a hazard to blind pedestrians.

This premise of this bill — that hybrids are "extremely hazardous" to blind pedestrians — is based on no facts whatsoever.

I took the time to tabulate the data from several Federal databases, including the US DOT's Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) data. There is **no** evidence to suggest that this is a problem. I summarize the findings below, and if you (your staff) would like a copy of my white paper on the subject I would be more than glad to email it to you.

I own a Prius. And, more importantly, Northern Virginia has one of the highest concentrations hybrid owners in the country.

If you have the opportunity, please do Northern Virginians a favor and vote against this bill. At the minimum, instead of mandating noisemakers on hybrids, the bill at least ought to ask DOT to look at their own data to see whether or not there appears to be a problem. Then, only if warranted, to proceed with some solution. As currently written, DOT has two years to determine the standards for noisemakers on hybrids, and then two more to implement the standards.

Finally, here are the main findings from my study of blind pedestrian deaths and hospitalizations, based on the DOT FARS data, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) data.

Thank you for your time in considering this matter.

Summary — Pedestrian Deaths

- From 2002 to 2006, an average of five legally blind pedestrians per year were killed in motor vehicle accidents in the US.
- No deaths of legally blind pedestrians involved a Prius or any other hybrid vehicle.
- For all US pedestrian deaths (blind and sighted), 11 deaths involved a Prius. (The Prius was singled out here because it is the only model with large production volume that was produced solely as a hybrid).
- For all US pedestrian deaths, a Prius was no more likely to be involved in a pedestrian death than the average passenger vehicle. The Prius accounted for 0.05 percent of passenger vehicles involved in fatal pedestrian accidents, and accounted for 0.05 percent of US registered motor vehicles, on average, over this period.
- For both blind and sighted individuals, only about 10 percent of pedestrian deaths occurred as the result of being struck while walking in a crosswalk. The rest occurred in other locations. More than two-thirds of both blind and sighted pedestrians were listed as contributing in some way to the accident. Of those tested, slightly more than one-third of both blind and sighted pedestrian decedents tested positive for alcohol.
- Data on hospitalization rates for pedestrian accidents confirm the death rate data. In a typical year, roughly 40 legally blind pedestrians are hospitalized as the result of a motor vehicle accident.
- Based on population estimates, the average a legally blind person is less likely to be killed or hospitalized as a result of being hit by a car than the average sighted individual. Legally blind individuals accounted for 0.11 percent of deaths and 0.15 percent of hospitalizations. But they account for 0.43 percent of the US population, or 0.23 percent of the US population under age 80.

The decision to mandate noise-making devices on hybrid and other “quiet” cars is being made in the absence of facts. This brief examination of publicly-available data was an attempt to get the facts on the table.

I found no evidence to support the hypothesis that hybrids are more dangerous than other cars, either to blind pedestrians or to pedestrians in general. The best-selling US hybrid, the Prius, was neither more nor less likely than average to be involved in a pedestrian death. Its rate of involvement in all pedestrian deaths over this period exactly matched its prevalence among all registered US passenger vehicles over this period.

One of the difficulties in making a fact-based analysis of this issue is that there are few blind pedestrian deaths. This makes it difficult to generalize about accident causes and potential benefits from policy intervention. On average, there are about 5 deaths and 40

hospitalizations per year for blind pedestrians struck by cars. By and large, the circumstances surrounding blind pedestrian deaths appear similar to those of sighted pedestrian deaths. Only a small minority of either blind or sighted pedestrian decedents were in a crosswalk at the time of accident. Rates of alcohol use and rates of behavior cited as contributing to the accident were roughly similarly for blind and sighted pedestrian decedents. The only notable difference from the FARS data is that blind pedestrian decedents were older, on average, than sighted pedestrian decedents.

Legally blind individuals appear less likely than others to be killed or hospitalized as a result of being hit by a vehicle. Whether this is because they have lower exposure (spend less time as pedestrians) or are more cautious is impossible to determine from the data examined here.

Together, the facts suggest that the Congress should move with caution in mandating noise-making or other devices on hybrid and electric vehicles. First, there is no evidence of a problem. The reported rate of pedestrian deaths from the Prius (a proxy for hybrids) was no higher than average, and as of 2006 there have been no reported blind pedestrian deaths due to collisions with hybrids. Second, the current number of blind pedestrian deaths and hospitalizations is small, while the number of cars to be modified is large. Even a modest cost per vehicle may result in a very large cost per putative life saved. Finally, as far as the data show, there is little qualitative difference between blind and sighted pedestrian decedents other than age, and the generally lower rate of pedestrian accidents for the blind (relative to their prevalence in the population). Research should demonstrate the specific harm and risk to the blind before the Congress mandates policy in this area.

Chris Hogan