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TO BUCKLE UP OR NOT BUCKLE UP, THAT IS THE QUESTION:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE ETHICAL DECISION MAKING PROCESS PERTAINING TO SCHOOL BUS RESTRAINT IN THE UNITED STATES

Suzanne Dapra Oliva*

Contents

국문초록

이 논문은 안전벨트가 미국에서 학교 버스에 필요로 하는지 여부의 윤리적 문제와 관련하여 윤리적 의사 결정 과정에 초점을 맞추고 있다. 원칙과 가치, 사회 문화적 기대, 법적 요구 사항을 포함한 사실을 분석 하였다. 그 결정의

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* J.D., C.P.A., Visiting Assistant Professor of Accounting, St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas

영향은, 이해 관계자, 고도로 경쟁 문제의 현재 상태를 강조하기 위해 행동의 다양한 과정의 결과가 확인되었다.

학생, 또는 학부모, 모두 조합 안전벨트에 찬성이다. 미국의 법률은 보호를 필요로 하는 어린이와 같은 레벨을 포함하여 개인의 권리를 보호하기 위해 통과된다. 이 경우에, 연방 의회는 필수 안전벨트를 필요로 할 것인지 여부를 결정하도록 허용하기로 결정했다. 이 문제를 결정하는 법률을 통과하기 위하여, 각 학교 지구는 그들의 특정한 관할 수요, 예산, 또는 다른 정당성에 기반하여, 학교 버스에 안전벨트를 필요로 하는 것이 적절한 경우인지를 결정해야 합니다. 모든 비용은 결국 학교 세금의 형태를 통해 성분에 의해 지급됩니다. 그러나 연방 및 주 의회는 이 예산부담을 인식하고 국가 보조금 및 판매 세금 인센티브를 제공하여 완화를 시도하고 있다. 이 문제는 미국에서 학교 버스에 안전벨트의 예를 이용하여 연구되었지만, 의사 결정 과정은 외국의 예를 사용하여 분석 할 수 있다. 궁극적으로, 의사 결정자는 행동의 적절한 코스를 결정하기 위해 자신의 특정 요구 사항을 분석하여야 한다.

주제어 : 학교, 버스, 안전벨트, 어린이, 의사결정

Ⅰ. INTRODUCTION

In the United States, school buses provide over 4.3 billion student trips every year and over half of the student population in the United States, or 24.9 million children, are transported daily by school bus either to and from school or to and from a school activity.[1] When families travel in personal vehicles, the law requires passengers to wear a seat belt and it is not

1) John Hinch, *School Bus Safety: Crashworthiness Research - Research and Development,* National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (April 2002), *available at* http://www.nhtsa.gov/Research/Crashworthiness/School+Bus+Crashworthiness+Research at 3; *School Bus Fleet Fact Book 2015*, *available at* http://sbf.epubxp.com/i/435218-factbook-2015/5 at 30.

uncommon for parents to tell their children "hop in the car and buckle up." However, in 44 states in the U.S., seat belts are not required on large school buses and the message that is given to school children is "hop on the bus and hold on tight."

This paper will address the ethical decision making process in the United States, focusing on the controversial topic of whether or not lap and shoulder combination seat belts should be required on large school buses. Are legislators, bus manufacturers, and elected school administrators, who have a duty to provide safe transportation to children, making the right ethical decision regarding safety restraint on large school buses?

Ⅱ. THE ETHICAL DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The word ethics is often defined as "the right thing to do." But, with regards to seat belts on large school buses, who decides? Should the answer be determined by the bus manufacturer, the passenger, the legislature, the school district, another governmental entity or a special interest group? Each of these stakeholders have given input as to their recommendations for the proper course of action.

In the United States, the commonly accepted process followed in order to determine what ethical action to take is as follows: identify the issue, gather the facts (including principles and values, societal or cultural expectations, legal requirements, and any possible codes of ethics), identify the stakeholders, identify the potential courses of action, identify the consequences, and choose the ("right thing to do") proper ethical action.[2] This process will be

2) O. C. Ferrell et al., BUSINESS ETHICS: ETHICAL DECISION MAKING AND CASES (10th ed. 2015); *See also* Douglas R. May, *Steps of the Ethical Decision-Making Process*, International Center for Ethics in Business, *available at* https://research.ku.edu/sites/

highlighted below in order to better understand how a decision maker arrives at an ethical conclusion.

Ⅲ. THE CURRENT STATE OF THE LAW

Federal law in 2015 requires all small school buses manufactured after October 21, 2011 weighing less than 10,000 pounds to have lap and shoulder combination seat belts for each occupant.[3] However, large buses weighing 10,000 pounds or more, which are far more common, are not required by federal law to have any type of seat belt except a lap or lap and shoulder belt for the driver.[4]

Federal legislators have left it up to the state and local legislators to decide whether or not seat belts should be required for passengers on large school buses.[5] Currently, only six states; California, Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Jersey and New York, require some form of seat belt on large school buses.[6] Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey and New York require large school buses to have a lap seat belt for passengers and Texas and California require lap and shoulder combination seat belts for passengers.[7] Crash tests and accident statistics show that lap and shoulder combination seat belts have been found to be safer than the lap seat belt alone.[8]

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research.ku.edu/files/docs/EESE__EthicalDecisionmakingFramework.pdf.

3) 49 C.F.R. § 571.222.S5b1iii (2015).

4) 49 C.F.R. § 571.222.S5 (a)(2) (2015).

5) Jolynn Vensel, Buckling Up, *Seat Belt Supporters Discuss the Benefits and Challenges of Utilizing Child Restraint Systems in their Yellow Buses*, SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION NEWS, May 2015 at 19, *available at* http://content.yudu.com/htmlReader/A3mqet/0515/reader.html?page=18.

6) *Id.*

7) *Id.*

8) *Id.*

In 2009, eight more states introduced bills to require seat belts on school buses but none of these bills passed.[9] State Representative Joe Armstrong has proposed legislation in 2015 to install seat belts in all Tennessee school buses.[10] Based on the increased number of inquiries from legislators of other states, expectations are that twenty or so more states are expected to introduce bills to require some form of restraint system on large school buses.[11] What is driving this rise in demand for school bus safety? Is it a reconsideration of what is the right thing to do?

Ⅳ. INJURIES ARE RARE BUT BUSES COULD BE SAFER

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, a non-profit organization founded in 1959 and funded by auto insurers, "School buses are the safest way for children to travel to and from school."[12] "They're far safer than walking to school, or even riding in mom or dad's personal car."[13]

Over the eleven years ending in 2005, the overall motor vehicle fatality rate was more than six times the fatality rate for school bus occupants.[14]

9) Andy Kim, *The School Bus Seat Belt Debate*, (2010), *available at* http://www.governing.com/topics/politics/lawmaking/school-bus-seat-belt-debate.html.

10) Armstrong, H.R.J.0770, 109th Leg., 2015 Tennessee Laws.

11) Kim, *supra* note 9.

12) American School Bus Council, available at http://www.americanschoolbuscouncil.org/school-bus-information-and-statistics/faq#how-safe-is-the-school-bus.

13) Kim, *supra* note 9; "The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 490 school-age children are killed each year during school travel while occupants of passenger vehicles."; *Safety in Numbers: The Bus is Your Best Bet*, SCHOOL TRAVEL, U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (August 2014).

14) *Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, Seating Systems, Occupant Crash Protection, Seat Belt Assembly Anchorages, School Bus Passenger Seating and Crash Protection,* Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 49 CFR Part 571, Docket No. NHTSA-2007-0014, RIN 2127-AK09 at 20 [hereinafter *Federal*].

Each year approximately 800 school-aged children die in non-school bus accidents during the hours before and after school.[15] From 1998 through 2008, there were at least 125 school bus passenger or school bus driver fatalities as a result of school bus accidents.[16] This translates to an average of over twelve passengers or bus drivers who are killed in school bus accidents each year.[17] And, as far as non-fatalities, statistics from the Transportation Research Board, which advises the government on issues of national importance, report up to 5,500 school bus passengers injured annually.[18]

Besides school bus design, one factor that has been found to increase safety on school buses is lap and shoulder combination seat belts. However, the issue of whether these lap and shoulder combination seat belts should be a mandatory requirement for all school buses, including buses over 10,000 pounds, is highly contested.

V. ARGUMENTS AGAINST MANDATORY SEAT BELTS

A. SAFE ENOUGH

School bus transportation in the United States has been found to be one of the safest forms of transportation.[19] Less than one percent of all traffic fatalities involving children under the age of nineteen occurred when they

15) *The Relative Risks of School Travel: A National Perspective and Guidance for Local Community Risk Assessment*, TRB REPORT 269, Transportation Research Board (2014) available at http://www.trb.org/main/blurbs/161028.aspx [hereinafter Risks].

16) *Traffic Safety Facts, School Transportation-Related Crashes*, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, (2008) available at http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811165.PDF.

17) *Id.*

18) *Risks*, *supra* note 15.

19) Hinch, *supra* note 1.

were passengers on a school bus.[20] In 2007, the National Association of Pupil Transportation, a group whose members provide school bus transportation, stated that it did not support the installation of lap belts on large school buses, nor the installation of lap and shoulder combination seat belts.[21] The National Traffic Highway Safety Administration (or NTHSA), a federal agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation created to research transportation issues, determined that the safety need for seat belts on large school buses was low and the "net effect on safety could be negative if the costs of purchasing and maintaining the seat belts and ensuring the correct use results in non-implementation or reduced efficacy of other pupil transportation programs that affect child safety."[22] Instead, the NTHSA recommends allowing the local school transportation planners to analyze their particular transportation risks and decide whether to incur the cost.[23]

Some argue that "compartmentalization", or the current school bus design of closely spaced, impact absorbing, high back, padded seats provides a high level of protection for the occupants.[24] However, in order for compartmentalization to be optimally effective, riders must be seated and facing forward.[25] Also, compartmentalization is designed to help protect passengers in front and rear impact situations and does little to protect passengers in side impact or rollover accidents.[26]

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20) *Id.*

21) *Federal, supra* note 14, at 10.

22) *Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, Motorcoach Definition, Occupant Crash Protection*, Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 49 CFR Part 571, Docket No. NHTSA-2010-0112, RIN 2127-AK56 [hereinafter *Motor*].

23) *Id.*

24) *Safety in Numbers: The Bus is Your Best Bet, Safety on School Buses*, U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, (2014) at 2. (Each school bus manufactured on or after October 21, 2009 must be equipped with a seat back that has a vertical height of at least 24 inches, 49 CFR 222.S5.1.2 (b)).

25) *Id.*

26) *Review of Major Bus Crashworthiness Studies by the National Transportation Safety*

When unrestrained children are seated three to a seat, crash tests result in the aisle passenger striking the seat frame and suffering additional injuries.[27] A NHTSA school bus research study found that a child who is belted with a lap and shoulder combination seat belt could reduce the risk in half of head and neck injuries than with compartmentalization alone on a large school bus.[28]

B. COST

In 2008, the NHTSA decided against requiring seat belts on school buses over 10,000 pounds rationalizing that bus costs would increase, less buses would be purchased and students would have to find alternative, less safe means to travel to and from school.[29] The estimated cost was an additional $7,500 to $10,000 to equip each school bus with a lap and shoulder combination restraint system.[30]

The National Academy of Sciences, a non-profit governmental entity established to provide advice on science and technology, conducted a study and concluded that funds used to purchase and maintain seat belts might better be spent on other school bus safety programs with the potential to save more lives and reduce more injuries.[31]

Board, National Coalition for School Bus Safety (Retrieved 2 December 2013) *available at* http://www.ncsbs.org/testimonies/crashworthiness_studies.htm.

27) Hinch, *supra* note 1.

28) *Federal*, *supra* note 14, at 19-20.

29) *Motor*, *supra* note 22.

30) Cheryl Wolf et al., *Smashing Results, IMMI's School Bus Crash Test Aims to Show Safety, Education Professionals How Lap-Shoulder Restraints Increase Student Protection*, SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION NEWS at 21 (October 2013) *available at* http://content.yudu.com/Library/A2g4y2/October2013DigitalMa/resources/1.htm.

31) *Federal*, *supra* note 14, at 11.

C. CAPACITY

Those who argue against seat belts point out that seat belts limit the number of students who can be squeezed onto a bus seat.[32] However, the majority of buses are not being fully utilized. On average, fifty-two children are occupants of any one bus, amounting to a 72% capacity.[33] Additionally, reduced capacity is no longer considered an issue because the new lap and shoulder combination seat belts allow for three elementary-age students or two high school-age students to fit on a standard seat.[34]http://www.safeguardseat.com/products/school-bus-seats/

D. EMERGENCY EXIT

One comment that has been mentioned is the fear that passengers would be less able to escape from a bus fire or water emergency if they were restrained in a seat belt. Water emergencies and bus fires are quite rare, occurring only twice in the last thirty years.[35] With proper instruction on how to use a seat belt cutting tool, school bus passengers will be able to quickly exit the bus during an evacuation.[36]

E. NON-USE

32) Shelly M. Leeke, *School Bus Safety: Use of Seat Belts Controversial* (2009) *available at* http://www.leekelaw.com/blog/school-bus-safety-use-of-seat-belts-controversial.cfm.

33) Hinch, *supra* note 1.

34) Wolf, *supra* note 30; http://www.safeguardseat.com/products/school-bus-seats/.

35) Hinch, *supra* note 1.

36) *Minnesota School Bus Seat Belt Requirements Clarified*, SCHOOL BUS FLEET (2015) *available at* http://www.schoolbusfleet.com/channel/regulations/news/2011/03/03/seat-belt-cutter-requirements-for-minnesota-buses-clarified.aspx; See also National Coalition for School Bus Safety *available at* http://www.ncsbs.org/facts2.htm.

Some reason that the funds are wasted if the seat belts are not worn. One Florida survey estimated that lap belt usage was approximately 70 percent for elementary school students, 36 percent for middle school students, and 25 percent for high school students.[37] Other jurisdictions report seat belt usage rates from 80% to 100%.[38]

Concern is also justifiably raised as to whether there is a potential liability on the part of the school bus driver or the school district, a local governmental subdivision responsible for education matters, for enforcement of use. Currently, this does not appear to be the case for the vast majority of states since Texas and California are the only states that require the students to wear the seat belts.[39]

VI. ARGUMENTS FOR MANDATORY SEAT BELTS

A. SAFER

During testing, a combination lap belt and shoulder belt system was found to perform best to prevent head injuries and neck injuries.[40] In 2002, the NHTSA issued a Congressional Report stating that properly used lap and shoulder combination seat belts have the potential to be effective in reducing fatalities and injuries for not only frontal collisions, but also for rollover crashes where seat belts are particularly effective in reducing

37) *Federal, supra* note 14, at 14.

38) *Fact Summaries - School Bus Safety*, The National Coalition for School Bus Safety *available at* http://www.ncsbs.org/facts1.htm [hereinafter Fact]; See also *Seat Belt Use in 2013 - Overall Results* (reporting 87% usage for passenger vehicles), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation (2014) *available at* http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811875.pdf.

39) Vensel, *supra* note 5.

40) Hinch, *supra* note 1.

ejections.[41]

The National Transportation Safety Board, a government agency that determines the causes of transportation accidents, states that properly worn seat belts make a school bus safer, especially during side impact and rollover accidents.[42] In 2013, a study was conducted in which engineers placed 13 crash test dummies on a test bus and found that, in a 25 mph crash, compartmentalization only provided adequate student protection when riders faced forward and didn't extend into the aisle.[43] However, children who were sitting on their knees and facing backwards would have suffered severe whiplash with a likely severe spinal injury or broken neck.[44] During side-impact and rollover collisions, children could be thrown from their seats into one another or the aisles, blocking a quick evacuation.[45]

Additionally, lap and shoulder combination seat belts can curb bad student behavior as well as driver distraction.[46] When the students are properly restrained, they can't move around, allowing the bus driver to pay more attention to the road and not be distracted.[47]

B. MINIMAL COST

Supporters of seat belt laws argue that the cost of purchasing and installing seat belts is miniscule, especially when spread over the fifteen

41) *Federal*, *supra* note 14, at 12.

42) *School Bus and Truck Collision at Intersection Near Chesterfield, New Jersey February 16, 2012*, Accident Report NTSB/HAR-13/01 PB2013-106638, National Transportation Safety Board (2013) *available at* http://www.ntsb.gov/investigations/AccidentReports/Reports/HAR1301.pdf.

43) Wolf, *supra* note 30, at 20.

44) *Id.*

45) *Id.* at 21.

46) *Id.* at 20-21.

47) Vensel, *supra* note 5, at 18.

year life span of the average school bus.[48] In 2006, the Dallas County System, the fifth largest transportation organization in the U.S., paid $19,000 for each new bus to be equipped with lap belts.[49] Other studies estimate the cost of the combination seat belts to be closer to $7,000 for each school bus.[50]

There are a number of incentives that may be available to help alleviate the cost of the upgrades. Annually, all states receive NHTSA Section 402 grant funds for activities which can include seat belt related activities.[51] One California state grant paid approximately 40 percent of the $200,000 cost of a new school bus.[52] Some states are even offering a fifty percent sales tax reimbursement on the purchase of school buses that are equipped with lap and shoulder combination seat belt restraint systems.[53]

C. LIABILITY

An additional cost consideration is the liability exposure of the school districts. Successful lawsuits based on negligence of the school board and administration for not providing seat belts is growing, along with the amount of damages awarded.[54] Overall liability is reduced when seat belts are installed, users are trained, and rules are in place to require use.[55]

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48) *School Bus Replacement Considerations*, National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services at 2 (2002) *available at* http://www.nasdpts.org/Documents/Paper-BusReplacement.pdf.

49) Vensel, *supra* note 5, at 18.

50) Paul Frisman, *State Laws Requiring Seat Belts in School Buses*, OLR RESEARCH REPORT (2010) *available at* http://www.cga.ct.gov/2010/rpt/2010-R-0055.htm.

51) *Federal*, *supra* note 14, at 22.

52) Fermin Leal, *Many School Buses Still Don't Have Seat Belts*, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER (2014) *available at http://www.ocregister.com/articles/buses-641374*-belts-school.html.

53) Kim, *supra* note 9.

54) Hinch, *supra* note 1.

Preventing one brain or spinal injury caused by a school bus accident could save a school district approximately $15 million.[56] In the school districts that have mandated the use of restraint systems, there have been no insurance increases and no successful lawsuits due to injuries caused by the seat belts equipment.[57]

D. SUPPORT

There is growing support for the addition of seat belts on buses. Eighty-five percent of parents surveyed want the added protection of lap and shoulder restraints for their children.[58] The National Coalition for School Bus Safety stated that if lap and shoulder combination seat belts coupled with compartmentalization affords optimum protection …, lap and shoulder combination seat belts should be required on large school buses to provide occupants side and rollover crash protection.[59]

Various other groups, including the American Medical Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, American Association of Oral and Maxillo Facial Surgery, American College of Preventative Medicine, Physicians for Automotive Safety, American Society for Adolescent Medicine, American College of Emergency Physicians and the Center for Auto Safety, have also endorsed the requirement of some form of seat belt on school buses.[60] Since 1996, representatives from the

55) *Id.*

56) James Kraemer, *Are Parents Mandating Seat Belts for School Buses?,* THE SCHOOL BUS (2011) *available at* http://theschoolbus-jkraemer.blogspot.com/p/are-parents-mandating-seat-belts-for.html.

57) Hinch, *supra* note 1.

58) Wolf, *supra* note 30, at 21.

59) *Federal, supra* note 14, at 22.

60) *Fact, supra* note 38.

American Academy of Pediatrics have argued for the lap and shoulder combination seat belt on every school bus.[61] Representatives from the National Coalition for School Bus Safety state that "If society believes seatbelts are desirable and necessary, then it's a grave oversight for schools not to offer our children that choice."[62]

Ⅶ. STAKEHOLDER CONCERNS

As noted, each of the various stakeholders have valid reasons for their recommendation as to whether or not seat belts should be required on all large school buses in the United States.

A. Bus manufacturers, presumably for-profit entities, would have additional sales of a safer product.

B. The passengers, both school children and their parents, expect and demand safety thereby creating public pressure on decision makers to prioritize safety on large school buses.

C. State legislatures, in all but six instances, have decided to leave the decision regarding seat belts on large school buses to each individual school district. In contrast, Congress has passed laws requiring lap and shoulder combination seat belts on all small buses, rationalizing that small buses are closer in size to a passenger car and transport less children, including disabled children.

D. The school districts determine what is best for their specific student transportation needs considering their budget, number of buses, number of passengers, type of roads travelled, other safety projects, and concerns raised by parents.

61) Leeke, *supra* note 32.

62) *Fact*, *supra* note 38.

E. In an effort to accomplish safe bus transportation goals without the imposition of mandatory laws for compliance, governmental entities have compromised full implementation of a mandatory law by providing financial incentives such as grant funding and sales tax incentives to help alleviate the cost burdens on the school districts.

F. Special interest groups such as medical groups, auto safety groups and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration have provided their recommendations as well. For instance, the medical and auto safety groups, who have treated or seen school bus injuries, primarily argue for seat belts, whereas engineers with the NHTSA tout the benefits of compartmentalization and primarily argue against seat belts.[63]

Ⅷ. APPLICATION OF THE ETHICAL DECISION MAKING PROCESS REGARDING SEAT BELTS ON SCHOOL BUSES

A. **Identify the Issue** - The issue at hand is whether lap and shoulder combination seat belts should be required for all large school buses in the United States.

B. **Gather the facts** - Once the issue is identified, the decision makers must gather facts, including principles and values, current laws that may impact the decision and societal or cultural expectations, for or against seat belt restraint on large school buses. The facts, including current laws and statistics were gathered to determine safety concerns.

C. **Identify the stakeholders** - The stakeholders are the people or entities that will be affected by the decision or can influence the decision. The

63) Kraemer, *supra* note 56.

stakeholders include the bus manufacturers, legislators, passengers, school districts, other governmental entities and special interest groups. Each of these stakeholders provide a perspective to the decision maker that will assist in determining what is the right thing to do.

D. **Identify potential courses of action** - The decision maker must identify potential courses of action or non-action that concisely and effectively implement the desired result. School district leaders must consider budgets, public priority, current laws imposed by federal and state legislatures, and potentially seek out financial incentives to achieve a result to satisfy public sentiment and expectations of public safety.

E. **Identify the consequences** - The decision maker must ethically weigh the consequences of remaining with the status quo or taking some affirmative action. The school district must consider what extent would doing nothing subject the school to legal liability and harm the children.

F. **Choose the proper ethical action** - By acknowledging the issue and weighing the consequences of inaction with the pros and cons of school bus restraints, governmental decision makers can proceed with what they believe is the right course of action.

IX. CONCLUSION

This paper has focused on the ethical decision making process with regards to the ethical issue of whether or not lap and shoulder combination seat belts should be required on large school buses in the United States. The facts, including principles and values, social or cultural expectations, and legal requirements, were analyzed. Those affected by the decision, the stakeholders, were identified as well as the consequences of the various courses of action in order to highlight the current state of this highly

contested issue.

Passengers, or their parents, are in favor of combination seat belts. Laws in the United States are passed to protect individual rights, including those in protected classes such as children. In this case, the federal legislature decided to allow each state to determine whether or not to require mandatory seat belts. Since only six states so far have passed laws determining this issue, each school district must then decide if it is proper for their particular jurisdiction to require seat belts on school buses based on demand, budget, or other justification. Any costs will eventually be paid by the constituents through the form of school taxes. However, federal and state legislatures have recognized this burden and attempt to alleviate it by providing state grant funding and sales tax incentives.

Although this issue was studied using the example of seat belts on school buses in the U.S., the decision making process could be analyzed using foreign examples as well. Ultimately, decision makers should analyze their particular requirements in order to determine a proper course of action.

[Abstract]

TO BUCKLE UP OR NOT BUCKLE UP, THAT IS THE QUESTION: AN EXAMINATION OF THE ETHICAL DECISION MAKING PROCESS PERTAINING TO SCHOOL BUS RESTRAINT IN THE UNITED STATES

Suzanne Dapra Oliva
J.D., C.P.A., Visiting Assistant Professor of Accounting, St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas

This paper will address the ethical decision making process in the United States, focusing on the controversial topic of whether or not lap and shoulder combination seat belts should be required on large school buses.

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Passengers, or their parents, are in favor of combination seat belts. Laws in the United States are passed to protect individual rights, including those in protected classes such as children. In this case, the federal legislature decided to allow each state to determine whether or not to require mandatory seat belts. Since only six states so far have passed laws determining this issue, each school district must then decide if it is proper for their particular jurisdiction to require seat belts on school buses based on demand, budget, or other justification. Any costs will eventually be paid by the constituents through the form of school taxes. However, federal and state legislatures

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Key words : school, bus, seat belt, child, decision making