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National School

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Senate Votes Against Ending Debate on Estate Tax

The Senate voted against ending debate on legislation repealing the estate tax and increasing the minimum wage just prior to recessing for the month of August. Cloture, which requires 60 votes to end debate, failed by a vote of 56-42. Republicans had attempted to include a number of "sweetener" provisions in the bill to attract Democratic support, but they were ultimately unsuccessful. This is the second time a cloture motion on repealing the estate tax has failed in the Senate. The House passed the legislation prior to recessing, but it is unclear if the Senate will be able to do so before the legislative session ends this year.

allowing it to move forward when the Senate returns in September.

s been tangled in jurisdictional squabbles between the two Committees, but they have now been resolved and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) has agreed to bring the legislation to the Senate Floor in September.

The bill authorizes about \$835 million a year for maritime security using existing Customs and Border Protection fees; requires a comprehensive strategic plan for supply-chain security; and requires the Department of Homeland Security to develop a program for quickly resuming maritime commerce in the event of a terrorist attack.

The House overwhelmingly passed its version in early May. The House bill authorizes more than \$1.3 billion in funding for Fiscal Year 2007, followed by an average of about \$840 million each subsequent year through Fiscal Year 2012.

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The National School Transportation Association (NSTA) was founded in 1964 by school bus contractors to "promote and foster the highest degree of safety in the transportation of school children"



Agreement Reached on Senate Maritime Security Bill

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chair Susan Collins (R-ME) and Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Chairman Ted Stevens (R-AK) have reached an agreement on a major maritime security bill,



New Board Member is... **BLAKE KRAPP**

In the last issue of the NSTA newsletter, we misprinted the newest addition to NSTA's Board of Directors.

We welcome Blake Krapf of Krapf Bus Companies (PA) who has taken Phillip Paige's position as an At-Large Delegate. Welcome aboard, Blake!



Rhode Island Plans Statewide School Bus System

The Rhode Island legislature passed bills last month that will change the way school districts contract for transportation in the state. In essence, the state department of education, in collaboration with the department of administration and the Rhode Island public transit authority, must develop a plan for the creation and implementation of a statewide system of transportation of students with special needs to and from school. The statewide system will be provided through a competitive request for proposals. Once the system is implemented, school districts will purchase the transportation services for their resident students with special needs by accessing the integrated statewide system on a fee-for-service basis for each child.

According to the bills, the goals of the statewide system of transportation for students with special needs are reducing duplication of cost and routes in transporting children from the various cities and towns to the same special education program providers using different buses from each city and town; improving services to children through shorter ride times and more efficient routes of travel; and reducing cost to local school committees through eliminating the need for each school district

to contract for and provide these specialized transportation services separately.

In addition to establishing the statewide system for transporting students with special needs, the same departments are charged with conducting a comprehensive study of all transportation services for students in Rhode Island school districts and developing a plan for a similar statewide system for transporting all students. The study and plan must be submitted to the legislature by January 15, 2007.



Travel Advisory – Air Travel's Do's and Don'ts

There was an excellent article in today's *USA Today* about what to expect at the airport these days. Here are some questions that were asked and answered:

Q: What *can't* I pack in my carry-on bag?

A: The new rules ban almost all liquids, creams and gels from being carried aboard flights. That means you should not pack sunscreen, lotion, shampoo, toothpaste, hair gel or beverages in a carry-on. Those items must be put in your checked bags. If you are in doubt about an item, pack it in a checked bag or leave it home.

Despite some rumors — and an incorrect early post on American Airlines' website Thursday — *there are no new restrictions on laptops, cell phones or other electronics on any flight originating in the USA.*

Q: Are there any exceptions to the new rules in the USA?

A: A few. You can still bring baby formula, breast milk or juice if you're traveling with a child; prescription drugs if your name is on the bottle; and insulin or other "essential" non-prescription medications. Screeners should not make you sample the liquids.

Q: Will I have to wait longer in lines?

A: Most likely. The government generally advises that you get to the airport at least two hours before your flight. But with tougher searches, authorities said, you should check with your airline. United and Continental, for example, are advising passengers to arrive three hours ahead for both domestic and international flights.

Q: How long will these new rules last?

A: That's not clear. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said the rules would be "constantly evaluated and updated when circumstances warrant." Chicago Aviation Commissioner Nuria Fernandez said the tighter restrictions will remain in place for at least 12 to 72 hours.

For the full article, please visit the following link:

http://www.usatoday.com/travel/flights/2006-08-11-airline-security-q-and-a_x.htm

www.
yellowbuses.



org



STSA Program Ready for Use

The School Transportation Security Awareness training program is now available for easy access through the Internet. This program, developed by Consolidated Safety Services with the help of NSTA, NAPT, and NASDPTS and funded by the Transportation Security Administration, features interactive online learning for a variety of personnel involved in school bus operations.

The program consists of a DVD and separate learning modules for drivers, fleet personnel, and administrators. TSA stresses that the DVD is not a stand-alone program; it must be used in conjunction with the online training modules. The modules can be used either in a classroom setting through the use of an LCD projector or for individual training on personal computers.

To access the STSA program, go to www.stsain.com. You must first register your company to obtain a company ID. You can then provide employees with the company ID so that they can log on to the training modules. Once you register, you can also order the DVD from that site. There is no charge for any of the STSA materials.

STSA is not a substitute for School Bus Watch; it is a complementary security training program. While there may be some overlap between SBW and the driver module of STSA, the focus of the programs differ. And STSA provides training specifically for employees other than drivers, such as technicians, dispatchers and managers. In addition, the

STSA DVD is intended to increase awareness among decision-makers such as school boards and state legislatures of the need for greater security in school transportation. For the most effective security training, we recommend using both STSA and School Bus Watch.



BP Shuts Down Alaskan Oil Field

Following the shutdown of an Alaskan oil field by BP due to a pipeline corrosion problem, the Department of Energy announced it is prepared to provide oil from the government's emergency supplies if a refinery requests it because of the disruption in supply. The pipeline accounts for approximately eight percent of U.S. production. The Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which was created after the 1973 oil embargo when Arab countries halted petroleum exports to protest U.S. support for Israel, is the nation's emergency stockpile of crude oil. The reserve has about 700 million barrels in storage on the Gulf Coast and is available in cases of serious supply disruption. Most of Alaska's oil goes to refineries on the West Coast.

Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman has said it could take months to resume normal shipments of Alaskan oil, but that there are adequate supplies to make up for the lost to West Coast refineries. Congressman John Dingell (D-MI), Ranking Member on the House Energy and Commerce Committee has called for Congressional hearings "to determine what broke down here and what laws and

regulations need to be improved to ensure problem pipelines like these are found and fixed earlier."



South Carolina Investigates School Bus Fires

Earlier this week a school bus in Anderson County, South Carolina, caught fire as students were on their way home from school. There were no injuries, as all students evacuated the bus in plenty of time, but the bus was destroyed.

What makes the fire noteworthy is that it was the third fire in South Carolina in less than four months involving the power steering fluid line on a Type D school bus.

In June, following the second fire, South Carolina officials ordered all 2100 Type D buses inspected for faulty battery cable clasps. In the previous incidents, the cables came loose and fell against the power steering line.

Eventually, the cable rubbed a hole in the line, causing the fluid to spray onto the hot engine and start the fire. The bus that burned this week had been inspected, according to State Director Donald Tudor.

Tudor said that although the power steering fluid also caused the latest fire, the line was broken at a different place and does not appear to be connected to the battery cable.

In South Carolina, the state owns all the school buses. The Type D buses, manufactured by Thomas Built Buses, were purchased in 1995. Thomas is cooperating in the state's investigation.



Judge Sentences Teens to School Bus

Indiana Superior Court Judge Julia Jent has found a way to get through to apathetic teens who violate traffic laws: she sentences them to ride the school bus instead of driving to school.

Judge Jent hit on the unusual sentence after failing to impress teens with ordinary fines for their offenses. When she saw the reaction to the school bus sentence, she knew she had finally hit a nerve. Jent sent a memo to every law enforcement agency in her jurisdiction stating that all moving traffic citations involving drivers age 16 to 18 must be seen by her -- instead of having mom and dad pay a fine, or, worse, having teens pay the fine and mom and dad not know what's going on.

If the high school-aged teens are found guilty, they are court-ordered to ride the school bus for a specific amount of time. If they violate the order, their driver's license will be suspended, and they must pay a fine. Jent checks in with bus drivers and schools to make sure the kids are on the bus—and she warns the parents that if they drive the teen to school, they are in contempt of court.

Each court order is tailored to the offender, the traffic offense and, most importantly, the teen's attitude. So far, Jent has sentenced about a dozen teens, with the most serious offender being sentenced to an entire semester on the bus. "You'd have thought I gave her and her mother the death penalty," the judge said.

After seeing Jent's success, another Superior Court judge in the state has adopted this tactic. If it catches on nationwide, we may see that increase in school bus ridership we've been looking for as well as a reduction in teen fatalities.



CPSC's Back to School Tips Show Risks Off the School Bus

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) yesterday published their annual reminder to parents on keeping children safe when they head back to school.

Among the reminders was a caution about drawstrings on children's clothing. CPSC says that in the last 20 years they have received reports of 23 deaths and 64 nonfatal injuries caused by entanglement of drawstrings on "such items as playground equipment."

CPSC notes that some children ride bikes to school rather than take the school bus, and it cites about 180 children killed and 250,000 children injured in bicycle accidents each year. More interesting, CPSC says that more than 200,000 children are treated in hospitals each year for playground injuries. According to NHTSA's most recent figures, about 8,000 school bus passengers are injured each year. By our accounting, that means children are 25 times safer on a school bus than in the playground. Go figure.



Mark Your Calendars!

NSTA will hold its Midwinter Meeting from January 27th to January 31st, 2007 in Tucson, Arizona at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort.

Room rates for the Meeting are \$219 single or double occupancy. The discounted rooms are limited and will be available until the block is sold out or until December 29, 2006 – whichever comes sooner. You can make your reservations by calling the resort at (520) 299-2020.

Welcome New Members!

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