



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P. O. Box 7882 Madison, WI 53707-7882

## Assembly Bill 74

Testimony from Representative Keith Ripp and Senator Luther Olsen  
Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations

*April 2nd, 2015*

Thank you Chairman Swearingen and the Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations for holding a hearing and allowing Senator Olsen and I to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 74.

Under current law, driver's education courses offered by public school districts must receive DPI's approval and driver's education courses offered by technical college districts must be approved by the Technical College System Board. It is important to note that currently, both public schools and technical college districts **can** offer driver's education classes online.

However, private and commercial driver's education schools, which are regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), **cannot** offer the classroom portion of Driver's Education online. This bill will remove this restriction and allow any school licensed by WisDOT to provide online training instruction instead of, or in addition to, providing it in a classroom. It is important to note that this bill only gives all schools the ability to use online training, but does not require it.

There are many reasons for supporting this bill and allowing students to take advantage of online training instruction. For instance, a student might prefer online driver's education classes due to convenience, availability of classroom courses, or preference for online learning. With modern technology, we have the ability to meet these needs.

Some advantages to making online driver education more widely available in Wisconsin include:

- Current law does not allow students in private school and homeschooled students to benefit from an online course. We would like to create parity between private and public schools for this reason.
- Students in outlying areas would have access to courses that might not otherwise be available.
- Students can learn at their own pace. Online learning allows students the opportunity to review and re-read sections that are vital to learning the safe operation and positive mental attitude required to become safe and proficient drivers.
- It provides the opportunity for parents and sponsors of teens to participate in this portion of the of the student driver training process.
- The strict standards, monitoring, and close scrutiny already developed by the <sup>DPI</sup>~~DOT~~ for online courses reduce the chance of misuse or cheating.

Studies on the effects of online driver education show that there is no negative impact of online classes when compared to traditional classroom training.

An amendment has been proposed, which will delay implementation of this legislation until six months after the enactment of this bill. This amendment will allow schools and WisDOT more time to readily prepare for online driver education classes.

Thank you members, we ask for your support and would be more than happy to answer any questions.

## Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations

To: Representative Rob Swearingen, Chair  
From: All-American Driver Training, Robert & Mary Kemp  
Date: April 2, 2015  
RE: AB 74

### PROBLEM/SITUATION:

1. Wisconsin currently has Online Classroom DE, and has since 2004.
2. Wisconsin Technical Colleges, Cesa and Public High Schools continue to offer Online Classroom DE and have since 2004.
3. At our request, DOT set strict Standards/Requirements/Security for Online Classroom DE in 2007 for Commercial Driving Schools.
4. Our Online Course Curriculum meets or exceeds all of those requirements and has been approved for over a year.
5. Due to the lack of appropriate wording in the Statutes, Wisconsin Commercial Driving Schools are prohibited from offering Online DE as an option.
6. Some Commercial Driving Schools are forced to find alternative routes around this problem, and offer the Online Course, therefore confusing and compounding the situation.

### ALTERNATIVES:

1. Do nothing, thus allowing sporadic and questionable compliance and providing limited consequences due to lack of clarity in the Statutes.
2. Correct the Statutes as proposed in AB 74.

### FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Only those in Fiscal Estimate attached to this Bill.
2. Commercial Driving Schools are self funding thus no financial impact other than FE.
3. Many States that have approved Online Classroom DE show an increase in employment for Commercial Schools, and also removes the financial burden from the Public Schools that opt to discontinue offering this non-academic course.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Approve the changes in the Statutes to allow all Wisconsin Approved Driving Schools, both Public and Private to offer, as an option, Online Driver Education.
2. Studies by DOT and other agencies have found no difference in the educational quality between traditional classroom and Online classroom.
3. Over the last 11 years if inadequacies were found, and Online Classroom DE proved to have a negative impact on teen drivers, the courses would have been discontinued or prohibited for all.

Thank you for your consideration,

Respectfully submitted, Robert C. Kemp  
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*Wisconsin Driver Safety Through Education & Training*