P.S. to the NEWS
by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

RELEASE: September 3

AUTO SEAT BELTS

A year ago the Department of Transportation issued a Federal decree requiring all automobiles manufactured after that date to have a seat belt system that makes it impossible to start a car unless the seat belts are properly fastened.

A recent study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety discovered that 41 percent of the drivers of 1974 model automobiles have found ways to bypass the interlock system. The Institute didn't inquire, but I would bet that there are another 41 percent who would like to bypass the system if they could figure out how to do it.

Having just bought a 1974 automobile, I must admit that I am one of the 41 percent who have found a way to bypass this ridiculous interlock system. The law prevented the automobile dealer from performing this service for me, and I couldn't do it myself; but I was lucky enough to have a couple of teenage sons who succeeded in delocking the system after two weeks of my constant annoyance at not being able to put my car in or take it out of the garage without locating and fastening the seat-belt shoulder-belt combination.

The light on the dashboard that warns "Fasten Belts" is harmless and probably helpful. But the buzzer is obnoxious and I certainly do object to the long hand of government denying my ability to start my car at all unless I harness up to suit the specifications of some bureaucrat.

Seat belts may save lives, but so would a prohibition on alcohol.

(more)

Drunk drivers not only kill themselves on the highways, but they kill many innocent people in other cars. Those who fail to use seat belts, however, are endangering only themselves.

The rapidly increasing cost of automobiles is due less to inflation than to the addition of expensive gadgets decreed by Big Brother in Washington under the prodding of Nadar-type consumerism. The seat belt interlock system adds $100 to the price of your new car. It is no service to the consumer to require us to pay for extras that we don't want and won't use.

In a free society, those who want to save themselves by expensive safety devices should be able to buy them, and those who don't should be free to take their chances. Anyway, we have had one automobile accident in our family where a life was saved only because the seat belt was NOT fastened.

There have been reports that the interlock rule had been suspended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, but a spokesman said that "no decision on that subject has been made." The House recently voted 339 to 49 to order the interlock system made optional, and 44 Congressmen then wrote to President Ford requesting that the interlock rule be lifted immediately without waiting for completion of pending legislation. In the Senate, the bill is sponsored by Conservative-Republican Senator James Buckley and liberal Democrat Senate Thomas Eagleton. The sooner this bill succeeds, the better for a free society.

(end)