

## Springfield Republican

### Editorial: Why doesn't Massachusetts have a primary seat belt law?

Published: Tuesday, April 05, 2011, 7:00 PM Updated: Wednesday, April 06, 2011, 3:32 PM

By **The Republican Editorials**

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File photo by Lori Stabile / The RepublicanNo one was injured when this car plowed into a house on State Street in Monson in 2008. Both the driver and passenger in the car were wearing seat belts.

Highway fatalities in the U.S. fell 3 percent in 2010 – to the lowest level since 1949 – continuing a trend that began in 2005.

Safer cars and repeated crackdowns on drunken driving have contributed to the decline in traffic deaths. But increased seat-belt use is cited by safety experts as the single most important reason for the steady decline in highway deaths.

That raises a perennial question here in the Bay State: Why doesn't Massachusetts have a **primary seat belt law?**

Michael A. Knoldler Jr., associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and director of the UMass SAFE Program, which focuses on traffic-safety research said, "A seat belt is the single most effective way to save your life in the event of a crash."

With virtual unanimity on the issue, we don't understand the Legislature's reluctance to pass a primary seat-belt law. It just doesn't make sense.

While Massachusetts has a law that mandates that everyone wear a seat belts, **drivers must be stopped for another offense before police can enforce the** seat-belt law.

As the Legislature prepares for its new session, lawmakers have yet another chance to do the right thing and pass a primary seat belt.

In the meantime, we urge Massachusetts drivers to make buckling-up, Rule No. 1 when they slide into the driver's seat. And drivers are carrying passengers, should urge them to do the same.

The bottom line hasn't changed in this debate: Seat belts save lives.