

VEHICLE FRAME HEIGHTS

House Bill 4864

Sponsor: Rep. James M. Middaugh

Committee: Transportation

Complete to 5-31-91

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 4864 AS INTRODUCED 5-23-91

The Michigan Vehicle Code currently prohibits operation of a passenger vehicle unless the vehicle is equipped with a bumper or similar energy absorption system, and prohibits operating or modifying such a vehicle in a way that the frame or body floor height is more than 23 inches off the ground. ("Passenger vehicle" generally means a motor vehicle weighing less than 5,000 pounds.) The act provides additional permissible frame heights for certain other motor vehicles designed to carry 10 passengers or less and constructed either on a truck chassis or "with special features for occasional off-road use," based on the manufacturer's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), but prohibits a frame height on these above 30 inches.

The bill would amend the act to require the bumper or similar absorption system on a motor vehicle to be securely bolted or permanently attached on both the front and rear of the vehicle, and would provide other restrictions on the types of modifications that could be made to a vehicle. A bumper could be temporarily removed, however, to install a snowplow, lift ramp, roll pan, or similar device. The bill would delete the current frame height limit of 23 inches that applies to passenger vehicles and replace this with a set of restrictions that would apply separately to a vehicle's frame height and bumper height. Also, these limits would apply separately to passenger vehicles and "other" vehicles, based on GVWR, as follows:

	<u>Height (in inches)</u>	
	<u>Frame</u>	<u>Bumper</u>
Passenger Motor Vehicle	14	22
Other Motor Vehicle		
Less than 4,501 pounds GVWR	24	28
4,501 to 7,500 pounds GVWR	24	28
7,501 to 10,000 pounds	26	30

If the GVWR of a motor vehicle other than a passenger vehicle could not be determined, the limitations for a motor vehicle having less than 4,501 pounds GVWR would apply.

Other Restrictions. Notwithstanding these provisions, the bill specifies that a person could not operate a motor vehicle having lift blocks between the front axle and springs, or with lift blocks more than four inches in height between the rear axle and springs in addition

to those installed by the original manufacturer. The act currently provides only that a vehicle "shall not be modified" in certain ways that could make it dangerous (i.e. exposing the fuel tank to damage from a collision). Under the bill, a person could not alter or add to an original frame that resulted in raising the vehicle's height. The following restrictions would also apply:

- * Any body lift or suspension lift block would have to be of single piece construction and could not use more than a three-inch spacer;

- * Spring shackle replacements could not exceed the original equipment manufacture length by more than one and one-half inches, and coil spring spacers would be prohibited;

- * Tires larger than 38 inches in "actual diameter" could not be used;

- * All steering components would have to be geometrically arranged to function as original equipment;

- * Welded pitman arms, drag links, and tie rods would be prohibited;

- * All parts used to modify the original suspension or height of a motor vehicle would have to be factory manufactured and meet or exceed the original manufacturer's specifications.

The bill would not apply to a vehicle having a manufacturer's design which intrinsically precluded conformance with the bill's provisions, a vehicle designed to carry 16 or more passengers including the driver, or a vehicle with an unaltered bumper or suspension system as supplied by the manufacturer. If a person was charged with operating a motor vehicle in violation of the bill, a rebuttable presumption of the violation would be created as to the original manufacturer's specifications.

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