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GOVERNOR'S OFFICE
EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS
COLUMBIA

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the House of Representatives:

I am herewith returning without my signature Joint Resolution Number 138, entitled: "TO AUTHORIZE AND DIRECT THE STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT TO SUSPEND THE INSPECTION OF ALL MOTOR VEHICLES UNTIL MARCH 1, 1948".

I hereby veto this Joint Resolution.

This Resolution directs the State Highway Department to suspend the inspection of motor vehicles required by law. It is suggested that a shortage of parts makes this action advisable for the present. Inquiry reveals, however, that there is no such shortage in parts relating to brakes, horns, lights and steering equipment as to justify permitting motor vehicles to operate on our highways with brakes or steering columns which lack and need parts in order to work efficiently. On the contrary, I am informed that, while heavy parts are still scarce, the parts needed in connection with the repair of safety features of motor vehicles will soon be available in abundance. Furthermore, it will probably require several months for the Highway Department to get set up for this inspection and the parts situation should be still further improved by that time.

The Act in question does not go so far as to suspend or repeal the laws requiring motor vehicles to have good and efficient brakes, and suitable horns or other signals, or lights, or other safety equipment. It merely suspends the preventive enforcement of these laws. There is no logic in this. The laws of the State requiring motor vehicle inspection were enacted to promote safety and keep down the heavy toll of men, women and children maimed and killed on our

highways. It is better to prevent violations of these laws by inspection rather than to rely entirely on punishment of the offender after some terrible tragedy has occurred as a result of faulty safety equipment.

During 1946, defective vehicles were involved in some 717 accidents on highways in South Carolina in which 76 persons lost their lives and 511 others were injured. Without preventive enforcement of our safety laws, the results will probably be even more tragic this year. The economic loss from these accidents involving defective vehicles has been estimated at \$741,000.00, more than the total cost of motor vehicle inspection for the four years between 1939 and 1943. It is impossible to estimate the value of human life, but if 76 lives could have been saved in South Carolina last year, or even one of the 76 lives sacrificed to defective motor vehicles could have been saved, who would say that motor vehicle inspection was not worth the money and inconvenience it cost?

Other states are adopting more stringent laws in an effort to check the present high mortality rate on highways. The South Carolina Safety Conference, held some months ago at the request of the President of the United States, recommended, after a careful study of the problem, that the inspection of motor vehicles be resumed. The alarming increase of deaths on the highways has caused President Truman to call a National Safety Conference in Washington for June 18-20.

While motor vehicle inspection may cause some inconvenience to our people, it will save many lives and will prevent many more persons from being crippled. I am satisfied that the law-abiding people of the State will prefer to bear some inconvenience for a time and thereby cooperate in the concerted efforts now being made to reduce the human and economic loss from accidents and promote safety in South Carolina.

April 3, 1947

J. Strom Thurmond
Governor