



## Elimination of Vehicle Safety Inspections

### *Testimony before the Texas Senate Natural Resources & Economic Development Committee for SB 1588*

by Vance Ginn, Ph.D.

Chairman Estes and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr. Vance Ginn, and I am an economist in the Center for Fiscal Policy at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, non-partisan free market think tank based here in Austin. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today for [SB 1588](#) that would eliminate mandatory auto safety inspections. We do find that the bill could be strengthened for Texas drivers by amending the bill to eliminate all associated fees. This would help reduce unnecessary regulations on drivers while allowing them to keep more money in their pocket and keep them safe on the road.

The Foundation published [Costs of Texas' Passenger Vehicle Safety Inspection](#) that reviews research on safety inspections and calculates the cost to Texas drivers in the last decade. Texas' safety inspections date to 1951 when HB 223 was passed by the 52nd Legislature to "set up state-appointed inspection stations to inspect all vehicles . . . in the hope of preventing accidents." Requiring regular inspections to ensure the functioning of basic safety features seems like prudent public policy; however, research finds no evidence that safety inspections actually increase driver safety.

Periodic inspections suffer from several unavoidable weaknesses. Annual inspection only ensures that covered parts function one day, or several minutes, out of the year. Studies examining safety inspections found that inspections had a small and insignificant effect on fatalities and injuries.

Mechanical defects cause surprisingly few accidents as well, limiting inspections' potential to save lives. Improvements in auto design and parts reliability appear to have reduced the frequency of accidents caused by mechanical failure compared to the 1950s.

This evidence is why Mississippi abolished its program in 2015, leaving Texas as one of just 16 states still requiring safety inspections. Most states without inspections authorize law enforcement personnel to ticket drivers if a car's safety features are not functioning.

SB 1588 would remove the \$7 fee paid to a station performing the inspection, which would save Texans [\\$130 million](#) annually; it cost Texans \$1.2 billion during the last decade. While the state has a responsibility to maintain highway safety, legislators are also obligated to end ineffective programs. Considering that Texans received little to no demonstrable highway safety benefit for the \$267 million in 2014 or the [\\$2.4 billion in total cost](#) from 2005 to 2014 of the state's mandated auto safety inspections, unnecessary safety inspections should be eliminated along with all associated fees so that more money stays in the pocket of drivers.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to answering your questions. ★

