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The Cauthorn Report

Move Over, It's More Than a Law – It's a Life

Recently two members of the Missouri State Highway Patrol family lost their lives due to the negligence of drivers. Inattentive motorists struck officers performing roadside duties. These tragedies are not easy on the family of the troopers, their fellow troopers, or the drivers involved. When you see a trooper working an accident or pulling over a motorist, please, move over.

According to the Highway Patrol, in 2005 four officers have been killed and two were seriously injured in the line of duty. During the last 12 months, 16 patrol cars have been struck at an accident scene or while performing roadside traffic stops.

A three-year old law is on the books requiring drivers to pull into another lane when a trooper has a car pulled over or is on the highway reconstructing an accident. Motorists are to make a lane change away from the stationary patrol vehicle, if safety and traffic conditions permit. If changing lanes is unsafe or impossible, motorist should proceed with caution and reduce their speed. Many people are unaware of this law and now more than ever we need to spread the word.

Sure, when most motorists see a trooper on the side of the road, the knee-jerk reaction is to hit the brakes. Most motorists are speeding and don't want a ticket. Well, our reaction when we see troopers working on the side of the road should be to 'move over' or safely reduce vehicle speed and proceed with caution.

While driving we need to pay more attention to the road. Daily we see the presence of cell phones and fast food occupying drivers. I have even seen people read while they drive. No burger or book is more important than the life of people doing their job.

The Highway Patrol reports there are 50 percent more cars on the road than there were 25 years ago. That increase, combined with speeding cars and inattentive drivers, has caused the horrific conditions we have seen.

In the coming months we will see educational campaigns about the "move over" law. My fellow lawmakers and I are working with the Highway Patrol to see what we can do to make their jobs safer. Many state agencies are collaborating as to how we can get the word out to motorists about the move over law.

However folks in Jefferson City work to get the word out, the message is still very simple: "mover over – it's the law." Our law enforcement officials are working hard to protect us. The least we can do is watch for their safety. Remember, move over, it's more than the law - it's a life.

Sen. Cauthorn represents Missouri's 18th Senate District. He can be reached at his capitol office at (573) 751-6858.
You can also visit his web page by going to www.senate.mo.gov/cauthor.