



NEWS RELEASE

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Governor Signs “Jessica’s Law”

JEFFERSON CITY— Legislation sponsored by Sen. Gary Nodler, R-Joplin, modifying laws pertaining to alcohol-related offenses was signed by the governor today.

Senate Bill 37 creates a gradation of penalties according to the conditions under which an alcohol-related crime that resulted in a fatality was committed. The measure also stiffens penalties for repeat drunk-driving offenders.

“We hope to see a deterrence of drunk drivers now that the crime will be more proportionately punished,” Nodler said. “And for those families that are torn apart by the carelessness of undeterred drunk drivers, this legislation will bring more of a balance to the scales of justice.”

Nodler drafted SB 37 in the name of 7-year-old Jessica Mann who was killed along with her grandfather, James Dodson, when a drunk driver struck them outside of Dodson’s home in Joplin last year. Jessica’s parents, Mike and Amy Mann, and their two children, as well as James Dodson’s wife, Betty, attended the gubernatorial bill-signing ceremony to express their appreciation to state lawmakers for sending a clear message that drunk driving will not be tolerated in Missouri.

Under the legislation, the penalty for involuntary manslaughter in the first degree is increased to a class B, rather than class C, felony if a driver has a blood alcohol content (BAC) between .08 and .18 and causes the death of any person who is not a passenger or causes the deaths of two or more people.

Furthermore, if the driver’s BAC is higher than .18 when he or she causes the death of *anyone*, he or she will also be guilty of a class B felony. If someone repeats this offense, he or she will be charged with a class A felony.

All defendants in the above cases must serve at least 85 percent of their sentence before they can be up for parole consideration. Legal consequences have also been stiffened for repeat driving-while-intoxicated offenses.

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