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that is morally wrong.*

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JEFFERSON CITY

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is the firmest friend of truth.*

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Senate Bill Enhancing Safety on Missouri's Highways Signed by Governor**

### ***Bill Stiffens Penalties for Reckless Drivers Who Endanger Lives***

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JEFFERSON CITY – Motorists will now face stiffer penalties if they fail to move over for an emergency vehicle, commit offenses in highway work zones, do not secure their children in safety or booster seats, or injure or kill someone because they failed to yield due to a comprehensive highway safety bill signed today by the governor. Senate Bill 872 known as the "Move Over" bill was sponsored by Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood. It was combined with other highway safety legislation sponsored by Sen. Delbert Scott, R-Lowry City, and Sen. Chris Koster, R-Harrisonville.

The bill stiffens penalties for drivers who fail to move over and slow down when they approach emergency responders on Missouri's roads and highways by increasing the penalty from a Class B misdemeanor to a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in jail or a maximum fine of \$1,000.

Gibbons says he drafted the legislation because four highway patrol officers have been killed while working traffic in the past four years.

"Highway patrolmen and emergency responders work everyday to save lives. We need to do what we can to protect theirs," Gibbons said. "We want drivers to help keep officers and emergency responders safe and alive by slowing down, staying alert, and moving over when they see emergency lights on the road. But when drivers are careless and ignore the law by speeding through emergency scenes, they put lives in danger and should face a tougher penalty."

Also included in the bill is legislation pertaining to highway work zone safety. Scott says the measure increases a number of penalties for people who drive recklessly or endanger the life of highway workers while driving through a work zone.

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Between 1999 and 2003, there were nearly 6,000 injuries and 97 deaths that occurred in Missouri highway work zone crashes. Three MoDOT employees were killed and 69 were injured in work zones in 2004.

“Crashes in work zones are causing too many deaths and injuries of Missouri workers who are simply doing their job trying to make our roads better and safer,” Scott said. “There is no excuse for not slowing down in construction work zones that are clearly marked, many times miles in advance. That is why we must make a concentrated effort to get drivers to slow down.”

The third segment of the bill requires children to be restrained by appropriate safety seats or booster seats dependent on their age, weight and height:

- Children younger than 4 years old, no matter their weight, must be strapped in a child safety seat.
- Children weighing less than 40 pounds, regardless of age, must also be secured in a child passenger seat.
- Children less than 8 years old, less than 80 pounds and less than 4 feet 9 inches, must be secured in a booster seat.
- Children above the weight and height requirements should be secured by seatbelts.

Koster said more than 30 children are injured each year in Missouri by improper use of seatbelts rather than the impact of the accident. Additionally, studies have shown that injuries to children will be reduced by 59 percent if the child is properly restrained. The fine for not using proper safety seats is \$50.

"We want more people to realize how booster seats can help protect their children," Koster said. "That is why we require the state to drop the fine if the parent or driver will get a booster seat."

The final segment of the bill is known as Clutch’s Law. It would create additional fines and even suspend a person’s driver's license if they injure or kill someone by failing to yield the right-of-way at an intersection. Nearly 5,000 people a year are injured or killed in failure to yield accidents.

Koster emphasized the importance of a comprehensive highway safety bill that will make Missouri’s highways safer for everyone.

“This bill is an important part in reducing auto accidents, keeping our children safe and making Missouri's roads safer for our families and loved ones.”

The new law takes effect on August 28.

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