



Gibbons Capitol Report  
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### **Save Lives: Slow Down and Move Over**

On Monday, a new law that stiffens penalties for drivers who fail to move over for emergency vehicles or commit offenses in a highway work zones takes effect. I sponsored the bill because too many law enforcement officers, emergency responders, and construction workers have lost their lives to inattentive and reckless drivers on Missouri roads. But this new law is as much about educating the public in order to save lives as it about punishing reckless drivers.

### **Dangerous Jobs**

Four highway patrol officers have been killed while working traffic in the past four years. The statistics are even more alarming for highway construction workers. Between 1999 and 2003, there were nearly 6,000 injuries and 97 deaths that occurred in Missouri highway work zone crashes. Since 2000, 239 MoDOT employees were injured and seven killed in highway work zones. This year alone, three highway workers have been killed in work zones on highways in the St. Louis area.

### **Move Over**

The law that takes effect Monday stiffens penalties for drivers who fail to move over and slow down when they approach emergency responders on Missouri's roads and highways. It increases 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 or both. Highway patrolmen and emergency responders work everyday to protect our lives and we need to do what we can to protect theirs.

### **Work Zone Penalties**

The law also creates two new crimes to help protect highway construction zone workers. The measures target people who drive recklessly or endanger the life of highway workers while driving through a work zone. If someone kills a highway worker, they can be fined up to \$10,000 and have their driver's license suspended for a year. Motorists convicted of speeding, passing another vehicle when workers are present or failing to stay in the proper lane will also be punished severely for endangering workers. When there are no injuries, drivers can be fined up to \$1,000 and earn 4 points against their license for each offense.

**Public Awareness**

When I was at the State Fair last week, I spoke with highway patrolmen about the new move over law. They said of the tens of thousands of miles they travel each week on Missouri roads they are seeing more and more people slow down and move over when approaching them on the side of the road. But the message hasn't reached everyone yet. The troopers had a patrol car on display to help educate fairgoers about the importance of moving over. The patrol car had been side-swiped by a tractor-trailer truck, with the patrolman inside. Fortunately the patrolman wasn't severely harmed, but the damage to the car was obvious.

With more than 1,000 highway construction work zones in Missouri this year, drivers need to remember the men and women working to make our roads safer. Motorists will see signs reminding them to "Slow Down and Move Over" for law enforcement officers and emergency responders. They will also soon see orange and white signs that read "Hit a Worker-\$10,000 fine-Lose Your License." Together, this new law coupled with these education campaigns will help protect the people who work hard to make our roads safe for us and our families.