



Gibbons Capitol Report  
October 19, 2006

### **Please Drive Safe in Work Zones**

On Tuesday, a tractor-trailer struck and killed Missouri Department of Transportation employee William Crain II.

Incredibly, Crain was killed while working to put up a memorial sign for a state trooper who had been struck and killed on the same stretch of Interstate 44 in 2005. MoDOT employees were installing signs that named part of the interstate for Missouri Highway Patrol Cpl. John "Jay" Sampietro. I met Sampietro's wife Jennifer earlier this year when she came to the capitol to share with lawmakers the importance of passing the move over law that I sponsored.

Coincidentally, on Tuesday I was traveling the same stretch of Interstate 44 where the accident occurred. I noted the Move Over signs along the route. Thanks to an aggressive education campaign, drivers are moving over for law enforcement and emergency responders. Unfortunately, not as many drivers are slowing down and driving safely through work zones.

### **Work Zone Penalties**

Part of the move over law we passed this year increases penalties for 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.

### **Dangerous Work Zones**

Between 2000 and 2004, 104 motorists were killed and 5,327 motorists were injured in Missouri work zones. The statistics for injuries and deaths of highway construction workers is even more alarming. Since 2000, 214 MoDOT employees have been injured and seven have been killed in work zones. There were three fatalities involving highway workers in the St. Louis metro area earlier this year. The accident on Tuesday marked the latest tragedy, and hopefully the last.

### **Record Amount of Construction**

This year the Missouri Department of Transportation is gaining a \$400 million increase from federal funds and the redirection of funds from the passage of Amendment III. More funding will bring safer highways to Missouri, but not without construction. There is a record number of construction work zones this year with more than 1,000 statewide. The good news is that our highways will be smoother and safer, but it also means drivers will need to be more careful.

The bottom line is these men and women are working hard to make our highways and roads better and, ultimately, safer for our families to travel. They work to protect our lives and we need to do what we can to protect theirs. Be aware of work zones. You can find out if there are work zones on your route by calling 1-888- ASK MODOT or visit the transportation department's website [www.modot.org](http://www.modot.org). By planning ahead you can choose a different route or leave early, knowing you may run into work zone delays. Either step could help save your life and protect a highway worker.