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'Ethan's Law' Receives Legislative Approval

JEFFERSON CITY— Less than a year after the tragic death of 6-year-old Ethan Cory, who drowned last summer at a private water park in rural Joplin, legislation has been passed by the General Assembly that works to prevent future tragedies.

House Bill 1341 was sponsored by Rep. Marilyn Ruestman (R-Joplin) and handled in the Senate by Sen. Gary Nodler (R-Joplin). The bill now moves to the governor for his approval before becoming law.

In July of 2007, Ethan Cory drowned at the Swimmin' Hole in Joplin during a trip with the Boys and Girls Club. The park did not have liability insurance, and thus did not have any sort of oversight because it was outside of a municipality and was privately owned. After their son's death, John and Lauren Cory worked with local lawmakers to require tougher rules for privately owned water parks.

"This legislation provides a new level of protection for Missouri swimmers," said Rep. Ruestman. "I'm pleased to have worked with Senator Nodler to honor the memory of Ethan Cory by passing 'Ethan's Law' through the General Assembly. It now only needs the governor's signature to be enacted."

The legislation requires water parks to carry insurance. Owners that do not insure their parks could be charged with a Class A misdemeanor and be subject to a fine of \$250 per day of violation. Insurance companies underwriting these liability policies would then require parks to follow regulated safety precautions.

"I would like to thank Representative Ruestman and the Cory family for working so hard to craft this legislation," said Sen. Nodler. "Ethan's Law will protect children throughout Missouri by increasing the safety at water parks so that this sort of tragedy can be prevented."

House Bill 1341 contains an emergency clause, meaning the bill would go into effect immediately after receiving the governor's signature, potentially applying to water parks as early as this summer.

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