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Senator Keaveny to Continue to Work For Higher Seat Belt Fines *SB 822 Would Increase Seat Belt Usage*

JEFFERSON CITY — Senator Joe Keaveny, D-St. Louis, today pledged to reintroduce legislation for the 2011 legislative session which would increase fines for motorists caught not wearing their seat belts. Senator Keaveny filed [Senate Bill 822](#) for the 2010 session, but the measure did not receive a vote in the Senate Transportation Committee. SB822 would have increased the fine for not wearing a seat belt from \$10 to \$50.

“The evidence shows that higher fines are associated with higher seat belt usage,” Sen. Keaveny said. “In fact, state surveys in 1998 and 1999 found that seat belt usage increased an average of 6 percent in states that had fines of \$30 or more. A study on seat belt laws from the University of Missouri and the University of Tennessee recommends states impose a fine of at least \$50 for seat belt violations to encourage compliance.”

Senator Keaveny notes seat belt usage in Missouri consistently falls below the national average. Surveys find 84 percent of all Americans wear seat belts, but just 77.2 percent of Missouri motorists wear seat belts.

The Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety reports that if Missouri had enacted a primary seat belt law in 2007, the state could have saved \$6 million in its annual budget for medical costs during the first year of the law, and \$122 million over a period of 10 years. The coalition contends a primary seat belt law would save at least 63 lives and prevent 759 serious injuries each year, while also bringing in \$16.2 million for MoDOT engineering, safety, law enforcement and public information projects.

Senator Keaveny says the upcoming *Click It or Ticket* campaign is a useful reminder to Missouri motorists to buckle up, but says increased fines will make a difference year round.

“The *Click It or Ticket* campaign last year resulted in more than 7,000 seat belt tickets,” Sen. Keaveny said. “That just shows the message about the importance of seat belts is not getting through to the public. Study after study shows that people don’t pay attention to seat belt laws if the fines are low. I mean, the courts fine people nearly \$80 for littering, but just \$10 for not wearing a seat belt. It’s interesting to note that littering seems to be down across the state.”

Missouri law enforcement officials will conduct the annual *Click It or Ticket* campaign May 24 through June 6. One hundred and eighty-eight law enforcement agencies participated in the 2009 campaign, resulting in 7,243 seat belt violations and 243 child restraint violations. This year’s campaign will focus on child safety seat violations. The Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety reports when drivers do not buckle up, 28 percent of the children are not restrained either.

For more information on the *Click It or Ticket* campaign, visit www.saveMOlives.com.

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