



NEWS RELEASE

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DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR VEHICLES AND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION LAUD PASSAGE OF SAFETY BELT LAW

~ Officials expect new enforcement provisions to save lives ~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and the Florida Department of Transportation have joined together to commend the Florida Legislature for passing Senate Bill 344, the “Dori Slosberg and Katie Marchetti Safety Belt Law.”

The new law allows for the primary enforcement of Florida’s safety belt requirements, which the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates will prevent 142 fatalities in Florida annually. The law will take effect June 30, 2009. According to a 2008 NHTSA study, states with primary enforcement laws rank in the top five for safety belt usage while Florida ranks 35th in the nation.

DHSMV Executive Director Electra Theodorides-Bustle and DOT Secretary Stephanie Kopelousos applaud the leadership of Senator Nan Rich, Representative Rich Glorioso, and Governor Charlie Crist in supporting and passing this important initiative. “The passage of this law is a testament to the willpower and dedication of many working together to make highway safety a priority. The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles is committed to keeping our highways safe and leading the way to *A Safer Florida*,” said Theodorides-Bustle.

Added Kopelousos, “The perseverance of former Representative Irv Slosberg and the Marchettis turned personal tragedy into a life saving initiative. Safety is the number one priority of the Florida Department of Transportation. We know this new law will save lives and reduce serious injuries on our roadways.”

Director of the Florida Highway Patrol Col. John Czernis echoed their support stating, “Very simply, safety belts save lives. This legislation will allow law enforcement officers throughout our state to treat a safety belt violation as they would any other violation. We are committed to modifying motorist behavior to ensure that they buckle up.”

The passage of SB 344 is particularly timely since the *Click It or Ticket* campaign kicks off in May. *Click It or Ticket* is a national education and enforcement campaign effort designed to raise awareness of the importance of wearing a safety belt, and is one of the most successful safety belt programs offered. State and local law enforcement agencies and safety advocate groups throughout Florida will team up to bring the important safety campaign to Floridians.

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