



Florida House of Representatives

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Representative Janet Long and Senator Paula Dockery file the Arrive Alive Act of 2010

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Representative Janet Long (D-Seminole) and Senator Paula Dockery (R-Lakeland) have filed the “Arrive Alive Act” pertaining to text-based communication while driving.

Filed as Senate Bill 328 and House Bill 323, this bipartisan effort seeks to make Florida’s highways safer by outlawing the use of text-based communications while driving. If passed, Florida will join 19 other states and be in an excellent position to receive potential federal incentives that are being enacted for states who are taking steps to reduce distracted driving. Now is the time to send a clear message to drivers that one text message or internet browsing session could put many other people’s lives at risk.

Senator Dockery became engaged in this issue after a tragic and totally preventable accident occurred in her district. On January 3, 2008, 26-year old Heather Hurd and her fiancé Patrick Richardson, also 26, were on their way to meet with their wedding planner. They never made it to their appointment. They and seven other passenger vehicles were stopped at a red light on US Highway 27 at Sand Mine Road in Davenport, (Polk County) Florida. An 18-wheeler, its driver text-messaging behind the wheel instead of focusing on the road, slammed into the back of the eight stopped cars, killing Heather and another driver, 37-year old Stephanie Phillips of Haines City. Patrick was seriously injured and airlifted to the closest trauma center. Six other people suffered injuries in the massive pile-up. Heather's parents,

Russell and Kim Hurd, have been working tirelessly since then, trying to get a bill passed in Florida, to ban text messaging while driving.

Unfortunately Heather Hurd's story is not the only one. Stories of text messaging related tragedies are echoing across the country. In September 2008, a Los Angeles commuter train conductor missed a red light while sending and receiving more than 40 text messages. His packed train collided head-on with a freight train, injuring 135 people. The conductor and 24 others were killed, making it the second worst commuter train crash in U.S. history. Just a few weeks later, a school bus carrying 21 students was rear-ended by an 18-wheel semi truck. The bus was pushed more than 200 feet before bursting into flames. Twenty students escaped, but 13-year-old Margay Schee was killed. The truck driver admitted he had been texting and hadn't seen that the bus was stopped.

“We are seeing an alarming rise in the number of traffic accidents and fatalities as the result of texting and driving. Scientific studies confirm that texting is the major cause. With increased awareness and passage of this bill, we will begin to make a big difference” said Rep. Long.

“Hopefully, this much needed legislation will cause drivers to reassess their desire to multi-task while operating a motor vehicle,” said Senator Dockery.

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