

Florida House of Representatives

Representative Alan B. Williams

District 8

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 22, 2010

CONTACT: Briana Toole

(850) 488 – 1798

DROWSY DRIVING PREVENTION BILL SPONSORED BY REPRESENTATIVE ALAN WILLIAMS SIGNED INTO LAW

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Representative Alan Williams (D-Tallahassee) welcomed the signing into law of Senate Bill 971, relating to Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

The legislation contains an amendment, taken from Representative Williams House Bill 221, that establishes a Drowsy Driving Week each September. Representative Williams was proud to work with the family of RonShay Dugans, a young girl killed in 2008 as a result of a collision with a fatigued driver, to sponsor and pass this important legislation during the 2010 legislative session.

Governor Charlie Crist signed House Bill 971 into law last week. The legislation makes a number of reforms to highway safety and motor vehicle laws, and incorporates other aspects of House Bill 221.

“There are approximately 100,000 automobile crashes a year that are caused by drowsy driving, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The RonShay Dugans Act is an effort directed at reducing this startling number, it is RonShay’s legacy to save lives,” said Representative Williams. Driver fatigue was cited by investigators as a possible contributing factor in a crash that claimed the life of 8-year old Ronshay, when a cement truck overturned on her school bus in Tallahassee, Florida.

“I would like to thank everyone who has had a hand in making this bill a success,” said Josie West, RonShay’s biological aunt and adoptive mother. “We look forward to Drowsy Driving Prevention Week for years to come, in hopes that Ronshay's memory will live on and that her sacrifice will not have been in vain.”

More than 17 states already have in effect legislation that requires education on the dangers of drowsy driving, including New Jersey, where it is a criminal offense to drive a car while sleep impaired. Florida now joins the ranks as one of the states to encourage drowsy driving prevention and education.

Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Stephanie C. Kopelousos pledged support for Drowsy Driving Week.

“Our message is very simple: Don’t drive drowsy,” Kopelousos said. “If you’re tired, let someone else take the wheel or get off the road and get some rest. The life you save might be your own.”

###