



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Assembly Passes Ohnstad Good Samaritan Bill

Assembly Bill 308 would protect individuals who rescue children, pets from hot cars

MADISON – Last night, despite a number of disappointing bills, the Wisconsin Assembly acted on a bipartisan basis and passed Assembly Bill 308 on a voice vote. The bill, co-authored by Reps. Tod Ohnstad (D-Kenosha) and Samantha Kerkman (R-Salem) and Sen. Bob Wirch (D-Somers), would exempt from civil liability a Good Samaritan who rescues a vulnerable individual or pet from an overheated locked car. Sen. Van Wanggaard (R-Racine) signed on as a cosponsor during the committee he chaired.

Unfortunately, this year alone 23 children in the US have died from heatstroke as a result of being left in a hot car. Thankfully, this number is down from previous years, with 31 deaths in 2014 and 44 in 2013. Since 1998, an average of 37 children per year have died from being left in a hot car. In addition, countless pets around the country die each year from similar circumstances.

Under the bill, an individual who reasonably believes a person or pet is in danger of harm while trapped in a car must call “911,” emergency medical services, or animal control before entering the vehicle. After they rescue the individual or pet, the actor must remain on scene until a first responder arrives. In following these reasonable steps, the Good Samaritan would be exempt from any civil liability for damage to a vehicle. The bill aims to save precious seconds when a person must make a decision on whether to break into a hot car.

On the floor of the Assembly, Rep. Ohnstad spoke in favor of the bill, and thanked members of the Kenosha community for helping to craft and pass this legislation. In particular, Kenosha Alderman Rocco LaMacchia, the Kenosha Common Council, and Kenosha Chief of Police John Morrissey, all of whom worked diligently to push for and improve this piece of legislation.

Assembly Bill 308 passed out of committee unanimously, as did its Senate counterpart, Senate Bill 230. The bill has broad support from both sides of the aisle, and is available for scheduling on the floor of the Senate.

Rep. Ohnstad serves as ranking member on the Assembly Committee on Jobs and Economy, as well as serving on the Assembly Committee on Labor, Assembly Committee on Ways and Means, Assembly Committee on Tourism, and Assembly Committee on State Affairs and Government Operations.

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