



Media Release

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Rep. Shankland Introduces Bipartisan Bill to Protect First Responders on the Roadway

MADISON – Today, Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point) and a bipartisan group of legislators introduced legislation (LRB-0570) to protect first responders and roadside workers. The bill would strengthen penalties for traffic violations like reckless driving in areas where emergency or roadside response vehicles are present and personnel are at risk from traffic. The legislation would also create an emergency response area and allow first responders to slow down traffic in the area. The bill requires the DOT to educate the public about these changes and the risks associated with not moving over, reducing speed, and putting away their cell phones in emergency response areas.

Rep. Shankland issued the following statement on this legislation:

“Our first responders put their lives on the line every day to protect the public. When I heard from multiple fire departments around the state that they'd rather run into a burning building than respond to an accident on the highway due to the risk of reckless drivers, I knew we had to do more to make our roadways safer. After over a year of conversations with fire chiefs, fire departments, EMS, and other stakeholders, I'm excited about the bill we've drafted to protect all roadside responders and educate the public about the responsibility we have to ensure others' safety as we drive. This bill is supported by **the Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin EMS Association, the Wisconsin County Highway Association, the Badger State Sheriffs Association, the Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, and the Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs Association.**

“This bill strives to protect our first responders and roadside workers from danger by creating an emergency response area, similar to a work zone, in which first responders can slow down traffic by reducing the speed limit, and where fines would double for speeding, reckless driving, and other traffic violations, including using a cell phone while driving. Since education is key to prevention, this legislation also requires the Department of Transportation to create an awareness campaign to ensure drivers are made aware of these changes, as well as the danger that their inattention or distraction can pose to the very people who come to the scene of an accident to protect us.

“Wisconsin's first responders serve a vital role in our communities, working tirelessly on the front lines to save lives and ensure public health and safety. While they risk their own personal safety in the process, too often people carelessly put them in harm's way due to distracted and negligent driving. We owe it to them to do what we can to minimize that threat, and that is exactly why I am proud to introduce this legislation. I especially want to thank Amherst Assistant Fire Chief Brian Swan and Amherst Fire Chief Victor Voss for their leadership role in the development of this bill and passion for worker safety.”

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