



## Media Release

*For Immediate Release*  
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### **Rep. Shankland Celebrates Assembly Approval of Roadside Responder Safety Bill**

MADISON – Yesterday, the Wisconsin State Assembly voted to approve [Assembly Bill 297](#), bipartisan legislation introduced by Rep. Katrina Shankland (D- Stevens Point) and a coalition of legislators including Rep. Amy Loudenberg (R- Clinton), Rep. Todd Novak (R- Dodgeville), Rep. Jon Plumer (R- Lodi), and Sen. Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) to protect first responders and roadside workers.

Assembly Bill 297 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 zone and allow first responders to slow down traffic in that area. Cell phone use while driving is also banned within the area. Finally, the bill requires the DOT to educate the public about these changes and the risks associated with failing to move over, reduce speed, and using their cell phones in emergency response areas. The bill will advance to be considered next by the Wisconsin State Senate.

Rep. Shankland issued the following statement in celebration of the bill's passage:

"I first became engaged with the issue of roadside safety for first responders after a reckless driver crashed directly into a fire truck in Waupaca as they were responding to an incident, and Amherst Fire Department Assistant Chief Brian Swan brought me down to the station to talk about it and how the Legislature might be able to help. Since then, I have worked with him, Amherst Fire Chief Victor Voss, my legislative colleagues from both parties, and roadside responders and stakeholder groups from across the state to craft and advance this legislation.

"Over the last few years, we have built a remarkable coalition of partners and bipartisan support, and I am thrilled that yesterday, the State Assembly rewarded our work together by approving this bill and sending it on to the State Senate. I urge my colleagues in the Senate to take it up as soon as possible, vote to approve it, and send it on to the governor's desk to be signed into law.

"I've spoken with first responders from all over the state who say they would much rather run into a burning building than handle an accident on the side of the road, and I've also spoken with their families, who worry most when their loved ones have to respond to an incident on the highway. There is one theme that underscores it all: everyone just wants their loved ones to come home safe.

"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. It is my hope that this bill will create a push for all of us to do better. It's simple: we can do more to protect our first responders, and we can do more to protect all workers who are responding to an incident on the roadside or roadway. We also can do more to take responsibility as drivers. This bill accomplishes all three through prevention, enforcement, and education. I'm proud of the bipartisan work we have accomplished together and thank the Amherst Fire Department for their leadership on this crucial legislation."

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