



Haine Legislation Dedicates Memorial Highway to Uhl Sisters

December 22 2011 9:08 AM

SPRINGFIELD, IL -- Senator Bill Haine (D-Alton) has introduced a resolution dedicating a stretch of Interstate 64 in memory of Jessica and Kelli Uhl, two Collinsville sisters who were killed Thanksgiving weekend in 2007 by former Illinois State Trooper Matt Mitchell, who was convicted of reckless homicide for his involvement in the accident.

"We wanted to fulfill the wishes of Kim Schlau, the mother of these two wonderful girls," Haine stated. "She has been a tireless advocate for promoting awareness of the dangers of distracted driving and her efforts on behalf of her daughters are truly courageous and commendable."

The Senate Joint Resolution, which was filed on Monday, renames the section of Interstate 64 between Exit 19A at Illinois Route 158 and Exit 23 at Illinois Route 4 as the Jessica and Kelli Uhl Memorial Highway. The resolution provides for appropriate signs or plaques to be erected to display this designation. A temporary memorial has already been placed on Highway 158 in honor of Jessica and Kelli Uhl under the fatal accident memorial marker program. The memorial contains the names of the two girls and states "Reckless Driving Costs Lives," but the marker is not visible from Interstate 64 and will be removed in less than two years unless this legislation is passed making the memorial permanent.

"While this resolution will never bring closure for such a tremendous loss, we can keep their memory alive for our citizens," Haine said.

Following the accident, the Illinois State Police ushered in new rules limiting on-duty officers' use of personal cellular phones and implemented a four-tier system of guidelines specifying how fast troopers may travel while responding to emergency calls.

"As a former State's Attorney, it distresses me personally that Mitchell wore the uniform of the Illinois State Police," Haine said. "It is beyond any doubt that Mitchell was an aberration as an officer of the State Police. Mitchell's disgraceful, reckless conduct was clearly not consistent with the tradition of excellence of the Illinois State Police."

In the spring legislative session, Haine passed a bill in response to Mitchell's workers' compensation claim for injuries he sustained during the accident. The bill, Senate Bill 1147, prohibits a person who is injured or killed at work from collecting workers' compensation benefits if the individual's injury, disablement, or death occurs while he or she was committing a forcible felony, an aggravated DUI, or reckless homicide that resulted in the death or injury of another person and the individual is convicted of the offense. Senate Bill 1147 passed both chambers unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Quinn in August.

"This was a very complicated measure that went through a thorough vetting process in the Senate," Haine said. "The bill was amended to address concerns in the Senate Executive Committee and ensures that reckless, criminal behavior is not rewarded in our workers' compensation system."

"I would also like to thank Representative Dwight Kay for his sponsorship in the House and assuring its quick passage," Haine added.

The Senate Joint Resolution will be read into the record on January 11th, 2012 and will receive a bill number at that time.

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****Photo Caption: Senator Bill Haine (D-Alton) presents legislation stemming from the Mitchell workers' compensation case seated next to Kim Schlau, mother of Jessica and Kelli Uhl, during the spring legislative session in Springfield, Illinois. (April 2011)*