



Durbin, Duckworth, Bustos Applaud New Dot Initiatives To Protect Roadside First Responders

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), along with U.S. Representative Cheri Bustos (D-IL-17), today applauded new U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) [initiatives](#) designed to help avoid traffic accidents and save the lives of first responders rushing to aid in emergencies. The new initiatives closely mirror legislation Durbin, Duckworth, and Bustos introduced last year that would establish a new national safety priority within an existing federal grant program to increase public awareness of “Move Over” laws and encourage implementation of life-saving digital alert technology. This technology is also referred to as V2X, or “vehicle-to-everything” communications systems, which can communicate with smartphones and other vehicles to alert passengers of an approaching emergency responder vehicle.

DOT’s announcement of these initiatives also follows appropriations language secured by Durbin, establishing a \$5 million pilot program to test and deploy these digital alert technologies to protect law enforcement, first responders, roadside crews, and others while on the job.

“We saw heartbreaking roadside accidents in Illinois last year, and we need to reverse the alarming rise in first responder roadside deaths,” Durbin said. “The initiatives announced by DOT are a helpful step forward that will provide states with resources to better enforce ‘Move Over’ laws and help keep our first responders safe.”

“One year ago this week, Illinois State Trooper Christopher Lambert was killed after being struck by a vehicle while assisting at a multi-vehicle crash. Trooper Lambert’s death and others like it reflect a troubling increase in first responder deaths that demands action,” said Duckworth. “I’m glad DOT is investing in new life-saving technologies like the First Responder Safety Technology Pilot Program, and I’ll continue to work

with Senator Durbin and Representative Bustos to increase awareness of ‘Move Over’ laws and protect our first responders.”

“We need to bring an end to the preventable tragedies we have seen along our roads and highways,” said Bustos. “That’s why I partnered with Senators Durbin and Duckworth to introduce legislation that brings awareness to our ‘Move Over’ laws and implements crash avoidance technology, and I’m pleased the Department of Transportation is taking initiatives to help address this issue. As the wife of a sheriff, I’m grateful for the work our first responders do every day and will continue to work to keep them safe.”

In April 2019, Durbin paid [tribute](#) to three Illinois State Troopers who were killed after being struck by vehicles on the sides of roads and highways last year. Durbin honored Illinois State Troopers Brooke Jones-Story, Jerry Ellis, and Chris Lambert, and recognized the efforts of Lucy Kuelper, the daughter of an Illinois State Trooper who created a Facebook page to raise awareness about move over laws.

The *Protecting Roadside First Responders Act*, introduced by Durbin, Duckworth, and Bustos last year, would establish move over law education and compliance as a national highway safety priority under existing NHTSA programs. This would allow states to apply for grant funding to execute move over law awareness campaigns, and to equip vehicles with digital alert and crash avoidance technology.

The digital alert technology, which is the focus of DOT’s new initiatives, is currently deployed by some localities around the country. This technology sends a real-time, audible, hands-free warning to motorists via navigation apps on their smartphone or their in-vehicle navigation system; notifying the driver when they are approaching an emergency responder vehicle. Deploying the technology only requires a small, inexpensive transponder to be added to emergency vehicles.

As of the Members’ introduction of the *Protecting Roadside First Responders Act*, 17 Illinois State Police (ISP) squad cars had been struck as a result of drivers failing to move over—twice as many as in 2018. Several suffered serious injuries and three of these incidents were fatal.

At least 37 auto-related first-responder deaths were recorded nationwide in 2019, of which 14 were officers struck by vehicles. Studies show more than 70 percent of Americans are unaware of Move Over laws like Scott’s Law in Illinois. All 50 states have Move Over laws.

Illinois’ move over law, called “Scott’s Law” was first enacted in 2002 to require motorists to slow down, and when possible, move over for all emergency vehicles with their lights on. It was later expanded in 2017 to include all pulled-over vehicles with

their hazard lights on. The law is named after Chicago Fire Department Lt. Scott Gillen, who was killed in 2000 on the Bishop Ford Freeway. In July 2019, Governor Pritzker signed a bill expanding upon the law, which increases the fines for violators and charges them an additional \$250 fee to establish a fund for education and enforcement of the law.

The *Protecting Roadside First Responders Act* would also:

- Require NHTSA to promulgate rules mandating crash avoidance technology on all new motor vehicles, within two years, including automatic emergency braking, forward collision warnings, and lane departure warnings.
- Require all federal fleet vehicles to have crash avoidance technology (automatic emergency braking, forward collision warnings, and lane departure warnings) within five years.
- Require all federal fleet vehicles used for emergency response activities to be equipped with digital alert technology within five years.
- Require research on the efficacy of Move Over laws and related public awareness campaigns as well as recommendations on how to improve these efforts to prevent roadside deaths.