



Durbin, Duckworth, Bustos Introduce Bill To Reduce Distracted Driving And Protect Roadside First Responders

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WASHINGTON – U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL) and U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), along with U.S. Representative Cheri Bustos (D-IL-17), today introduced legislation designed to reduce crashes involving distracted driving and save lives, including preventing first responder roadside deaths. The bill would require the implementation of life-saving safety technologies on all new vehicles, including federal fleet vehicles, fund the deployment of digital alert technology for first responders, and increase public awareness of “Move Over” laws.

“We see heartbreaking stories of roadside accidents in Illinois every year due to distracted driving. To help save lives and reverse the alarming rise in first responder roadside deaths, we must increase the use of crash avoidance technologies and awareness of ‘Move Over’ laws,” Durbin said. “The Protecting Roadside First Responders Act will require life-saving technologies in all new vehicles while providing states with the resources they need to help keep our first responders safe.”

“The troubling pattern of first responder roadside deaths demands action,” said Duckworth. “I’m glad to be working with Senator Durbin and Representative Bustos on this important bill that would help increase awareness of ‘Move Over’ laws and invest in the implementation of innovative, life-saving technologies to reduce risk and better protect our first responders.”

“As the wife of a sheriff, I’ve seen too many preventable tragedies along our roads and highways,” said Bustos. “That’s why I’m proud to partner with Senators Durbin and Duckworth to introduce legislation that brings awareness to our ‘Move Over’ laws and implements crash avoidance technology. Our first responders put their lives on the line every day, and this is one step we can take toward helping keep them safe.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), every day about eight people in the U.S. are killed in crashes involving a distracted driver. This amounts to roughly 3,000 deaths and 400,000 injuries each year from distracted driving. About one in five of those deaths involve people outside a vehicle such as pedestrians, cyclists, and roadside first responders—which has made roadway accidents the leading cause of officer-line-of-duty deaths nationwide.

Over the last three decades, every major surface transportation bill signed into law has advanced new technologies resulting in significant public safety improvements such as airbags, electronic stability control to prevent rollovers, and seat belts. These advances have garnered bipartisan support and saved tens of thousands of lives. In fact, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that between 1960 and 2012, more than 600,000 lives have been saved by motor vehicle safety technologies.

There are more available and affordable technologies, such as advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS). ADAS, including automatic emergency braking, forward collision warnings, and lane departure warnings, could be saving thousands of lives now if similarly mandated as standard equipment on new vehicles. Many auto manufacturers already offer them on their new vehicles, but they are usually only available at additional costs that many families cannot afford. Mandating these technologies will make their safety benefits available to everyone, and as history has shown, a minimum safety standard can greatly accelerate these technologies and reduce their cost.

Similarly, the deployment of digital alert technologies in first responder vehicles would save lives. These technologies alert drivers through existing navigation apps when they are approaching a roadside first responder and direct them to follow “Move Over” laws.

Without timely action on these needed safety advances, the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety estimate that, over the next four years, approximately 144,000 people will be killed and nearly 11 million people will be injured in motor vehicle crashes. Nearly 25,000 of the fatalities will be pedestrians and more than 3,300 will be bicyclists.

The Protecting Roadside First Responders Act would:

- Require ADAS on all new vehicles within five years including federal fleet vehicles;
- Expand eligibility of existing NHTSA safety grants to fund the deployment of digital alert technology for first responders; and,
- Expand eligibility of existing NHTSA safety grants to fund public information campaigns about Move Over laws.

The following organizations support the Protecting Roadside First Responders Act: Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety; American Public Health Association; Amica Mutual Insurance Company; Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways; Consumer Federation of America; Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety; Families for Safe Streets; FIA Foundation; KidsAndCars.org; National Coalition for Safer Roads; National Consumers League; National Safety Council; Parents Against Tired Truckers; Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research; State Farm Insurance Companies; Trauma Foundation; Truck Safety Coalition; Vision Zero Network; .05 Saves Lives Coalition