

# Orlando Sentinel

## Red-light bill moves gains speed

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TALLAHASSEE -- With the parents of two young Orlando girls killed by a red-light runner looking on, the Florida House today gave preliminary approval to a bill that would more than double fines for drivers who run red lights.

The "Velez Memorial Traffic Safety Act" was named after the Velez sisters --Anjelica, 5, and Victoria, 2 - who were run down in October by the driver of a sport utility vehicle that authorities said ran a red light.

The legislation raises the fine for running a red light from \$60 to \$125. It sets aside the increased funds for struggling hospital trauma centers, where victims of serious car accidents are sent.

It must pass the House once more. Similar legislation is moving through the Senate.

The girls' parents, Ivan and Yamilka Velez, looked on from the visitors' gallery in the Florida House today as lawmakers gave the measure preliminary approval with no debate.

If the legislation passes, Ivan Velez said, it would ensure that their daughters' deaths were not in vain. But, he said, increased fines are only a first step. Others have called for red-light traffic cameras and for laws making it easier for red-light runners to be hit with criminal charges. Those proposals have not found traction in the state Legislature.

"Florida has a major issue with people running red lights," Ivan Velez said. "It's a start. This is just the beginning of what's needed."

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