



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

#### **ADDITIONAL BILLS FILED TO HELP SAVE FLORIDA'S TRAUMA CARE**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (March 10, 2005) – This week, Sen. Jim Sebesta (R – St. Petersburg) and Rep. Holly Benson (R - Pensacola) filed SB 2434 (Driver Responsibility) and HB 1455 (Florida Driver Responsibility Law) which will increase the penalties on various motor vehicle infractions such as driving under the influence (DUI), driving without insurance or driving without a valid driver's license. The additional funds raised would support Florida's 21 trauma centers.

"It is very encouraging that Florida's Legislators are concerned with the funding crisis facing Florida's trauma centers," said Amy Maguire, director of the Alliance to Save Florida's Trauma Care. "HB 1455 and SB 2434 will help to ensure reoccurring funding for Florida's trauma centers."

Rising readiness costs may force many of Florida's trauma centers to close their doors or stop providing specialized trauma services. In 2003, the cost for Florida's trauma centers to be "prepared" totaled more than **\$96 million**, with a net loss of **\$93 million** including reimbursement, according to a recent study mandated by the 2004 Florida Legislature and conducted by the University of Florida and the University of South Florida on behalf of the Florida Department of Health.

These staggering numbers have created the need for long-term funding solutions to ensure the future of the state's trauma centers. Because motor vehicle crashes comprise more than 50 percent of trauma incidents in Florida, the Alliance is working with legislators, such as Benson and Sebesta, to create legislation that will increase fines on dangerous motor vehicle violations and distribute these funds into Florida's trauma system.

HB 1455 and SB 2434 will place additional penalties on the following violations:

- DUIs - \$1,000 on first offense, \$1,500 on any successive offenses and \$2,000 on any offense where the driver's blood alcohol level is .20 or higher
- Driving without insurance - \$250

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- Driving without a valid driver's license - \$250
- Driver improvement classes - \$25 for the first class, \$50 for the second class and \$100 for the third or additional classes
- Points on driver's license - \$100 per point penalty (a \$25 per point penalty for every point after seven) for those acquiring seven or more points in a 36-month period
- Load violations - \$250

“While Florida is fortunate to have advanced trauma care, the system needs our help,” said Benson. “Traumatic accidents can happen to anyone, anywhere. We need to make sure this specialized care is available for those who need it.”

Other Florida's legislators, including Rep. Andy Gardiner (R - Orlando), Sen. Burt Saunders (R – Naples) and Rep. Dean Cannon (R – Winter Park), have also pledged to help solve this crisis. In addition to the above bills, Cannon and Saunders have submitted HB 497 and SB 1264, respectively (Relating to the Velez Memorial Traffic Safety Act –2005), which will increase the fees on red light violations from \$65 to \$125 and distribute them to Florida's trauma centers.

The Alliance to Save Florida's Trauma Care is comprised of trauma centers, advocacy organizations, patients, medical personnel, providers and concerned citizens. Our goal is to inform and educate Floridians and our legislators about the trauma crisis and to help find solutions to this problem. For additional information, access [www.SaveFloridaTrauma.org](http://www.SaveFloridaTrauma.org), or call (888) 536-7806.

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