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Florida Now 28th State with Primary Safety Belt Law
Gov. Crist's and State Lawmakers' Leadership Will Make Florida's Roads Safer

Washington, D.C. – Florida Gov. Charlie Crist's signature establishing Florida's new primary safety belt law today will not only save lives and prevent injuries, but also will entitle the state to \$35.5 million from a soon-to-expire federal incentive plan that rewards states for increasing safety belt use.

Florida's 18 million residents now covered by a primary safety belt law bring the total number of Americans covered by the lifesaving legislation to 221 million, a full 72 percent of the nation's population. Twenty-eight states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico now have primary safety belt laws.

"The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers was pleased to join AAA, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, the National Automobile Dealers Association and the National Safety Council to advocate for this legislation, and we applaud Gov. Crist's leadership as well as the state legislature's leadership on this issue," said Alliance President and CEO Dave McCurdy. "In 2007, a full 59 percent of Florida's car and light truck fatalities were not wearing safety belts. Making the enforcement of safety belt laws equal to virtually all other traffic law violations will certainly increase Florida's usage rate."

Florida patrol officers can now stop and cite a motorist for not wearing a safety belt without observing another traffic violation. Enacting this law will not only bring the state millions of dollars in federal funds for use in transportation projects statewide, but also will boost safety belt usage rates and save lives.

"Passage of this lifesaving bill has been a long time coming, but the lives that will be saved and the injuries prevented make it all worthwhile," said Kevin Bakewell, senior vice president of AAA Auto Club South, which has lobbied on this issue for more than 10 years. "Improving travel safety is what AAA is all about and we thank the bill sponsors and legislative leaders who helped move Florida in that direction."

"Florida's new seat belt law will save lives and cut down on injuries," said Phil Brady, president of the National Automobile Dealers Association. "NADA commends Florida's elected officials as well as the many Florida dealers—especially Alan Starling of Starling Chevrolet and George Nahas of George Nahas Saturn of the Lakes—who have been working for years to help enact this lifesaving legislation."

“The National Safety Council praises Florida, its dedicated state legislators and state leadership who helped achieve this truly significant goal. Florida is now poised to save hundreds of lives,” said Janet Froetscher, NSC President & CEO.

Studies have shown that wearing a safety belt reduces the chance of being fatally injured in traffic crashes by 45 percent or more.

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