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GREENSTEIN/MILAM/DeANGELO BILL CRACKING DOWN ON RECKLESS DRIVERS CLEARS COMMITTEE

'Jessica Rogers' Law' Would Make Road Rage a Criminal Offense

(TRENTON) – Legislation Assembly members Linda Greenstein, Matt Milam and Wayne DeAngelo sponsored to crack down on reckless and aggressive drivers was released today by an Assembly committee.

The bill (A-1561) – dubbed “Jessica Rogers’ Law” – would include road rage in the state’s assault-by-auto statute and would lead to enhanced punishments for individuals convicted under that law. The bill has been named after Jessica Rogers, a young woman from Hamilton, Mercer County, who suffered severe injuries and was left paralyzed from the chest down following a March 2005 auto accident that resulted from road rage.

“Drivers who put their own selfish needs before the safety of the public must be held accountable,” said Greenstein (D-Middlesex/Mercer). “Road rage is more than a cultural phenomenon; it is a real threat to others.”

Jessica, who was 16 at the time of the accident, was a passenger in a vehicle that slammed into a telephone pole after the driver – angered that he had been cut-off – attempted to illegally pass another car on the shoulder. Both Jessica and another passenger were seriously injured in the wreck. The driver was convicted of two counts of assault by auto and sentenced to six months in jail and five years probation.

“Far too many motorists have been put in harm’s way, or worse, because another driver let their emotions run wild,” said Milam (D-Cumberland/Atlantic/Cape May). “On our increasingly crowded roads, we need to send a message to reckless drivers that rank indifference to their fellow motorists will not go unpunished.”

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“Any driver who allows their rage to control their actions behind the wheel essentially turns their vehicle into a deadly weapon,” said DeAngelo (D-Mercer/Middlesex). “A simple slap on the wrist or ticket can no longer do.”

The Assembly Judiciary Committee released the measures by a 6-0 vote. It now heads to the Assembly Speaker, who decides if and when to post it for a floor vote.