

Written by By Larry Phillips, Texas State Representative
Thursday, 14 April 2011 11:36 -

April 7, 2011 - Last session, the legislature passed 81 (R) HB 339, as known as the "Less Tears, More Years" Act. HB 339 made many changes to the graduated driver's license program aimed at increasing the safety of our young drivers. HB 339 also required the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to report students that were no longer enrolled in school to the Department of Public Safety (DPS). Due to restrictions at the federal level in providing student information to agencies outside of TEA, this section was unable to be implemented. Additionally, since the bill has been enacted, it has become evident that some clarification in the language regarding the use of a wireless communication device for drivers under the age of 18 is needed.

This session, I have authored HB 2466, which provides clarifying language that a driver under the age of 18 may not use a wireless communications device while driving and also revises the circumstances under which a school, law enforcement officer, or the student's parent/legal guardian can report the student's absence from school to DPS for the revocation of the student's license.

Motorcycle safety awareness for both riders and drivers is an important tool in preventing motorcycle accidents. To this end, Mike Grove of Bells, Texas, has worked to educate motorists regarding the importance of watching for motorcyclists through the Motorcycle Fatality Awareness program. This program places red crosses on the roadside where a fatal motorcycle accident has occurred. I have authored HB 2469, which places the red cross memorial sign program into statute, and designates that the law be known as the Mike Grove Motorcycle Fatality Awareness Act.

Sport bikes are high-powered motorcycles that are increasingly popular. These bikes can reach very high speeds, and when used improperly, can be dangerous. This session, I have authored HB 2470, which defines "sport bike" as a class of motorcycle that is optimized for speed, acceleration, braking, and maneuverability on paved roads, has a light-weight frame, and is not a touring, cruiser, standard, or dual-sport motorcycle. In addition to the requirements related to all motorcycles, HB 2470 provides that the operator of a sport bike may not carry another person on the sport bike unless the operator is 18 and has held a motorcycle license for at specified period of time. The bill provides that if a bike is designed to carry a passenger, it must be equipped with foot pegs and handholds for the passenger. HB 2470 is called "Malorie's Law" in remembrance of Malorie Bullock, of Sherman, who was a passenger on a sport bike when she died last year. Malorie's family made the trip to Austin to testify on the bill in committee, and I thank them for their moving testimony on behalf of the bill.

Politics: Capitol Watch - Some of session's bills aimed at making roads safer

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