

The **Association** report

from the **Capitol**

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Highway worker safety will likely be a subject of discussion again this year at the state capitol. Rep. Neal St. Onge, Chairman of the House Transportation Committee has filed HB 1421 which would strengthen the work zone safety law passed in 2006.

The proposal would mandate jail time for intoxicated drivers who injure a highway worker. This is believed to be of greater significance now because more highway construction is being done at night. The bill also expands current law to allow a prosecutor to charge a person with a class B felony for killing a highway worker if criminal negligence is determined.

The bill would also require that the crime of assault of a law enforcement officer, emergency personnel, or probation and parole officer be expanded to include a highway worker in a construction or work zone.

It was Rep. St. Onge who led the legislative initiative a couple of years ago to significantly increase penalties for speeding and careless driving in highway work areas. Our Association helped push the bill over the finish line in a campaign that took a lot of hours of walking the capitol halls. A noticeable increase in awareness of the danger to highway workers has resulted from those efforts.

Another anticipated safety related piece of legislation would allow the highway patrol to operate automated speed enforcement in work zones. Tickets would be mailed to drivers who are caught by cameras speeding in a work area. It is believed that a bill of this nature will be introduced in a few days.

**From Harry Hill, Lobbyist
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