



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Senate Passes Legislation to Protect Cyclists

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS June 25, 2010

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On Friday, June 25, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins announced the Senate passed legislation (S7897) requiring motorists to pass bicyclists proceeding in the same direction at a safe distance. Once the bill has passed in both houses it will be sent to the Governor for his signature. Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins introduced the legislation after Merrill Cassell, an avid cyclist and safety advocate, was fatally struck by a vehicle last year, while cycling in Greenburgh, NY.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the State of New York had 42 bicycle-related traffic fatalities in 2008 alone. Several states have already implemented similar provisions, which require drivers to maintain a distance of no less than three feet between the vehicle and the bicyclist, including Connecticut, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Tennessee, and Utah.

“This legislation will serve to educate the public about the need for motor vehicles and bicyclists to share our roads safely,” said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins. “The buffer zone is a reasonable and necessary safety precaution for cyclists that often need to maneuver around cracks, potholes or the hazards that cycling on our roads can present.”

Failure to compile with the requirement will result in a traffic infraction, deterring vehicles from passing at a distance that jeopardizes the safety of everyone traveling on our roads.

“Additional space between the passenger side of a moving vehicle and the cyclist will make the use of bicycle lanes safer, lowering the number of injuries and fatalities that accidents cause each year. Basic safety measures established under this legislation will encourage cycling, which is both a transportation alternative that reduces traffic congestion and pollution, as well as a healthy sporting and recreational activity,” concluded Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins.