



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrea Stewart-Cousins

Bicycle Safety Bill Sponsored by Senator Stewart-Cousins Signed into Law

ANDREA STEWART-COUSINS August 15, 2010

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Today, legislation (S7897) Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins introduced and passed in the Senate to protect bicyclists was signed into law. The new law requires motorists to pass bicyclists proceeding in the same direction at a safe distance. 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. Requiring motorists to pass at "a safe distance," this legislation will serve to educate the public about the need for motor vehicles and bicyclists to share our roads safely.

"I am pleased that this bill, which is a common sense solution to reduce the number of accidents that claim far too many lives and cause far too many injuries each year, has been signed into law," said Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins (35th District – D/WF). "Cycling should be safe for everyone and this legislation will establish the basic safety measures necessary to encourage cycling, which is both a transportation alternative that reduces traffic congestion and pollution, as well as a healthy sporting and recreational activity."

"This will send a clear message to motorists that cyclists have a right to the road," said David Wilson, president of Westchester Cycle Club and Bike Walk Alliance of Westchester & Putnam. "The roads were built to be shared."

Wilson thanked Stewart-Cousins for her swift action on the bill, following the death of Merrill Cassell, a Greenburgh cycling advocate who was one of her constituents. Her proposed law initiated negotiations in Albany, which led to the bill signed by Gov. Paterson.

"Merrill Cassell's spirit will live on with this law," Wilson said. "It will make our roads safer for cyclists."

Wilson said he contacted the state Department of Motor Vehicles today to offer his assistance to develop a campaign to educate the public on what is meant by passing "at a safe distance."

Seventeen states have already enacted safe passing laws to protect cyclists riding on the right side of the road. A violation will result in a traffic infraction, deterring vehicles from passing at a distance that may harm or kill bicyclists.