



SENATE MAJORITY OFFICE

Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, OR

NEWS RELEASE

February 26, 2018

CONTACT: Rick Osborn (503) 986-1074
Rick.osborn@oregonlegislature.gov

Duties of hit-and-run drivers need to be redefined

HB 4055 is a response to an Appeals Court decision about obligations of drivers involved in accidents when there is property damage, injury or death

SALEM – The Oregon Senate is sending a bill to Gov. Kate Brown for her signature that will hold more hit-and-run drivers accountable to the people who are harmed, or whose property they have damaged.

House Bill 4055 – which passed the Senate on a 27-0 vote – lists obligations drivers must meet when they learn, after leaving the scene of a collision, that they may have been involved in a collision involving injury or death to another person; injury or death to a domestic animal; or damage to a vehicle, fixtures or property.

“According to our current hit-and-run law, unless you realize at the time of the accident that you’ve seriously injured or possibly killed someone with your car, you have no responsibility to help them,” said Sen. Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, who carried the bill on the Senate floor. “It shouldn’t ever have to be debated that it’s wrong to have our laws written or interpreted that way. House Bill 4055 will require the driver to take reasonable steps to comply with the statute upon realizing they were in an accident.”

The bill is a response to an Oregon Court of Appeals decision that stems from a case in 2013 when a driver ran over a pile of leaves in Washington County. Two young girls were in the leaf pile and were killed by the injuries they sustained in the accident. The driver, it was ruled in court, was not required to return to the scene because she did not become aware that she had hit two people until later.

“The current law, as defined by the Court of Appeals allows for, or even encourages, plausible deniability,” Washington County Senior Deputy District Attorney Bracken McKey testified. “We can do better. Whether you’re from Track Town USA or Bike Town, this is a law that protects the most vulnerable in our communities. Oregonians are stronger when we look out for each other. When we do the right thing.”

The bill also adds additional duties to drivers involved in these collisions, such as investigating what the vehicle struck and providing the phone number of the insurance carrier of the vehicle.

Susan Robinson is a teacher of 17 years in Washington County and the mother of Anna Robinson and Abigail Robinson, the two girls who were killed in the automobile collision addressed in the Appeals Court case. She forgave the woman who was driving the car that terrible day, because the driver was young and Robinson didn’t want to let anger consume her.

“The way the current law stands she had no obligation to identify herself as the person who was involved in the accident. This has caused our family a tremendous amount of added grief in a situation where our grief is already immeasurable,” Robinson said. “In making this change someone in the future, already trying to survive a perfect storm, will not be faced with what we have gone through the past 4 years. Years of reliving tragedy. If the law changes, our girls will have had a small piece of making that happen and that will make us very proud. I can’t go watch Abigail on the stage and I can’t watch Anna ride her big horse Teva anymore, but what I could say is that my girls helped change a law that was broken.”

The bill now goes to Gov. Kate Brown for her signature.

###