

“Shib’s Law” honors Sesser firefighter killed in the line of duty

SPRINGFIELD – Illinois State Fire Marshal Larry Matkaitis is reminding drivers about a new law that protects firefighters by giving them the authority to close lanes of traffic while responding to an emergency situation. Senate Bill 2488 was inspired by the death of a Sesser Fire Protection District firefighter named James “Shib” Miller who was hit and killed by a Greyhound bus in 2007 while fighting a truck fire on Interstate 57 in Southern Illinois.

Prior to the new law, which went into effect on January 1, 2009, only law enforcement officers or representatives of the Illinois Department of Transportation had the jurisdiction to close lanes of traffic while responding to an emergency situation.

SB 2488, sponsored by Sen. Gary Forby (D-Benton) and Rep. John E. Bradley (D-Marion), also increases the penalty for reckless homicide when a driver does not follow “Scott’s Law,” which is named for a Chicago firefighter killed in the line of duty. On the books since 2002, “Scott’s Law” requires drivers to change lanes when they approach an emergency vehicle with flashing lights on the shoulder or a construction or maintenance vehicle in a work zone. The penalty will increase to a class 2 felony, punishable by 3-14 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine