



Representative Scott Jiu Wo Kawasaki

Alaska State Legislature

District 1 Fairbanks

CSHB 204 (JUD) Sponsor Statement

An act relating to overtaking and passing certain stationary vehicles.

In 2012, Robert Hammel, a 60-year-old Girdwood man who worked for the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, was responding to an accident on the Seward Highway. As he was laying cones down around the damaged pick-up to alert drivers of the potential hazard, he was struck by a passing vehicle and was killed on impact.

House Bill 204 would add road maintenance vehicles to the list of vehicles that already require drivers to vacate the nearest lane or to slow down when approaching certain stationary vehicles conducting official business. These include emergency, fire, law enforcement and animal control vehicles and tow trucks when lights are flashing and performing official duties.

Currently, to alert and prevent drivers from coming within an unsafe distance of a work zone, state, municipal and private contractor maintenance workers place cones and deploy flares. However, these are only visual deterrents and are frequently ignored. With no law specifically requiring the traveling public to grant a certain area of distance between their vehicle and a roadside road maintenance vehicle, drivers are not legally required to do otherwise. As a result, they put themselves and road workers needlessly at risk.

If a driver fails to vacate the lane or slow down as required and causes personal injury, the driver is guilty of a class A misdemeanor. If a person violates the law, but does not cause personal injury, the driver is subject to \$150 fine and 2 points assessed against the driver's license.

Vehicles conducting road maintenance are already fitted with flashing lights designed to alert traffic of their presence and status of performing road work. To implement HB 204, no additional equipment costs are required.

More than 35,000 people are injured in work zones nationwide, while about 700 people, including 130 workers, are killed in work zone accidents every year. This bill would help avoid dangerous, unnecessary collisions, resulting in saving lives as well as thousands of dollars for both potential victims and the State.

I urge your support of HB 204, a simple bill in the interest of Alaska's road travelers and those who repair and maintain our road system.

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