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NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL URGES SUPPORT OF PRIMARY SEATBELT LAW

Primary Safety Law Will Save Lives and Could Earn \$7.4 Million for Nebraska

OMAHA, Nebraska - The National Safety Council, Greater Omaha Chapter seeks support for a primary safety belt law that is pending in the Nebraska Unicameral. Senator Lowen Kruse has introduced LB 812, a legislative bill to change our safety belt law from secondary to primary. Passage of this law has positive safety and financial implications.

Nebraska's safety belt usage rate is currently 79%, below the national average of 82 %. In 2004, 214 people died while riding in cars and light trucks in Nebraska. Of these, 62 percent died while not wearing their safety belts. Many deaths could have been prevented if the occupants of the crashed vehicle had been properly restrained with a safety belt. In addition, the state can earn \$7.4 million in Federal grant money that can be used on highway improvement and safety.

"A primary seatbelt law in Nebraska has direct and indirect financial impact on our state," said Kay Farrell, president and chief executive officer of the National Safety Council, Greater Omaha Chapter. "First we receive a large payment from the Federal government in the form of a highway funds bonus. The second, indirect source of revenue will come from costs **not** spent on emergency healthcare, long-term health care and funerals."

Jurisdictions with stronger belt enforcement laws continue to exhibit generally higher use rates than those with weaker laws. Mississippi's strengthened belt law in May 2006 increased their usage rate by almost 13 percentage points. (DOT HS 810 690, April 2007) According to NHTSA the percentage of increase among non-users can be as much as 40 percent (Traffic Safety Facts, 323, March 2007). Additional NHTSA research tells us that a primary law for Nebraska would mean 21 lives saved, 361 serious injuries prevented and almost \$60 million in economic costs would be saved. Those savings bring residuals, as they are repeated not only this year, but next year and every year thereafter.

For more information on the LB812, please contact ??.

About the National Safety Council, Greater Omaha Chapter

Founded in 1924, the National Safety Council, Greater Omaha Chapter is a private non-profit, community based organization that promotes safety and health by providing programs, resource services and education to individuals and organizations to prevent both the personal and economic loss associated with injuries, accidents and health hazards wherever they exist. Under the leadership of the National Safety Council, Greater Omaha Chapter, the greater Omaha metro area was recently designated a safe community by the United Nation's World Health Organization (WHO). For more information, visit www.safenebraska.org.

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