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legislation

By BENJAMIN WEST yesterday

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RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — In October, Lt. Bradford Clark, a Hanover County firefighter, was killed when a tractor-trailer failed to “move over” as mandated by Virginia law. Now, the General Assembly plans to memorialize Clark through a specialty license plate and strengthen the state’s “move over” law.

As Tropical Storm Michael pummeled Virginia, Clark

responded to an accident in the left lane and shoulder of Interstate 295. A

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“Public safety officers have repeatedly expressed their concerns to me of dying in the same manner my husband did,” Clark’s widow, Melanie Clark, told lawmakers as she testified in favor of legislation to strengthen the “move over” law.

“They fear they will not come home to their families because of the increased life-threatening dangers that exist while working on highways and byways.”

Enacted in 2002, the “move over” law requires motorists to

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including police, firefighters, tow trucks and Virginia Department of Transportation crews. A first offense is a traffic infraction with a fine of up to \$250, and a second offense is a Class 1 misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$2,500 fine.

Del. Chris Peace, R-Mechanicsville, said accidents caused by drivers who fail to move over have increased recently. Speaking before the House Courts of Justice Committee, he cited a day in December, during a

snowstorm, when four state troopers were rear-ended in a 24-hour period.

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1911, which would strengthen the current law and make the first offense a Class 1 misdemeanor rather than a simple traffic infraction. The bill passed committee Monday and is on track to be approved by the full Senate before the end of the 2019 session.

Clark called her husband's death entirely "avoidable" and "untimely." She said her husband was aware of the danger and gave his life to warn the other three firefighters on the scene.

"With little time and a tractor-trailer barreling down on them, Brad warned



lives and cost him
his own.”

To further honor
Clark’s legacy and
bring attention to
his death, the
Senate passed a bill
Monday
designating a new
specialty license
plate inscribed
“MOVE OVER” and
bearing a picture of
Clark. That
legislation, HB
2011, also was
sponsored by
Peace.

“Brad was a
dedicated public
servant and family
man,” the Clark
family wrote in a
statement shortly
after his death. “We
delight in the
joyous years we
spent with Brad
and the time we
had to know the
hero that he was,

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Most of the plate's annual \$25 fee will go to the Fredericks Family Fund Foundation, which has pledged to use the money to "honor and help take care of" Clark's widow and four daughters, according to organizers.

By Jan. 31, 515 paid registrations were collected, surpassing the 450 needed for the initial legislative vote and to print the plates. For the foundation to financially benefit, at least 1,000 registrations are needed.

To order a Lt. Bradford Clark Memorial Plate, visit

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