

## **SNAGGING "SUPER SPEEDERS" IN GEORGIA IS A SUPER IDEA**

Well, they finally got something right under the Gold Dome. After enduring a spate of proposals in this legislative session that range from silly (the governor's "Go Fishing" program), to scary (deciding how the state will redevelop Jekyll Island), to serious (rescuing PeachCare insurance), to just plain dumb (cutting the school-year calendar), here comes "Super Speeder" legislation designed to crack down on those who drive like bats out of Hades on our highways.

Amid the unnecessary hoopla of a bunch of Hollywood actors parading up to the state capitol on their motorcycles to plug their movie, Gov. Sonny Perdue announced he was introducing a bill to add an additional \$200 fine to anyone caught going over 85 miles per hour on the interstates (most anybody who drives a vehicle in Georgia) and those driving over 75 miles per hour on two-lane roads (most everyone else). Fines and penalties would also be increased for those who have multiple drunk-driving or reckless-driving offenses (and who shouldn't be driving in the first place).

I had hoped the governor would include a provision that also would allow us to stop drivers who tailgate us and beat them severely about the head and shoulders with a stick, and if they tailgate while talking on a cell phone, to string them up from the nearest tree we can find. It is probably just as well that he didn't, because the assembled movie stars probably would have gotten in a dither and fallen off their motorcycles. Saying stuff like that makes movie stars nervous.

Gov. Perdue estimates the additional fines could generate from \$25 million to \$30 million annually and would be used to fund a trauma care system throughout the state. Just as importantly, the fines would deliver a swift kick in the pocketbook to the village idiots who think that blithely ignoring speed limits is a freedom guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, and who make our highways a potential death trap for the rest of us.

I spend a lot of time driving around the state, and I fear for my life every time I venture onto Georgia's autobahns. The worst are I-985 near Gainesville, Highway 316 to Athens, I-95 from Savannah to the Florida line and I-75 and I-85 going anywhere. Actually, there aren't many roads in our state where speeders won't scare the dickens out of you.

The excuse I hear from the speed demons is that speed limits should be higher. Yeah, and my taxes ought to be lower, but I have to pay them anyway. You can't just obey those laws you find convenient. That isn't the way our system works. Besides, if you want to speed, join NASCAR and run around in circles to your heart's content.

Remember that you have a ton-and-a-half machine that takes more yardage than a football field to stop at 80 miles per hour, let alone at 85 to 90 miles per hour. That isn't just an automobile you are barreling down the highway in — it is a potential killing machine. Last year in Georgia, 1,700 people lost their lives in traffic accidents — that averages to about one person every five hours. These aren't benign statistics, folks. These are real people — mommas and daddies and sons and daughters, friends and neighbors — people who could and should still be with us.

I asked Sen. Ronnie Chance (R-Tyrone), one of the governor's floor leaders, about the odds for passage of the Super Speeder legislation. "I can't imagine why anyone would be against this bill," he said. "It is an opportunity to slow down speeders and at the same time to fund trauma centers which are greatly needed, particularly in rural areas of Georgia. It is an issue about which the governor and I feel very strongly." I do, too, Senator. I sincerely hope members of the Legislature feel the same way and will drop partisan politics for a moment and turn this legislation into law. This bill isn't about Democrats or Republicans. It is about saving lives and telling a bunch of lead-foots that speeding on Georgia's roads isn't so super after all.