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Saturday, July 18, 2009
2:03 PM

Source: Frankfort Station

Bill in honor of Frankfort resident fades in legislature Taxi safety regulation stuck in state Senate committee

by Lauren Traut

June 24, 2009

State legislation pushing more stringent taxi regulations in honor of deceased Frankfort resident Lyndsey Whittingham has stalled in the Illinois Senate.

State Representative Renée Kosel (R-New Lenox) has worked to strengthen safety regulations for taxi drivers since Whittingham's death in 2006 and despite House Bill 4050 passing through the House in April, it failed to move out of the Senate's Assignments Committee at its June 1 deadline.

The bill met strong opposition from the City of Chicago, which Kosel said claimed Home Rule against the legislation; the City believes it should be allowed to create its own taxi safety regulations, free from state interference.

The bill would have required taxi drivers to be 21 years old, possess a valid driver's license issued in the U.S. for at least three years and be free of convictions such as driving under the influence of alcohol during the three-year period prior to driving a cab.

Whittingham died after being struck by a taxi and the driver responsible was issued minor citations.

Kosel has worked since Whittingham's death to create heavier regulations for drivers, which included the Taxi Safety Act of 2007. The act implemented mandatory drug and alcohol testing for a taxi driver who is involved in an accident with a pedestrian which results in bodily injury. It also required that all taxi drivers display their identification in the vehicle and a phone number for passengers to report unsafe driving.

Kosel said she plans to tweak HB 4050 before re-presenting it next year.

"We won't make it any less stringent," Kosel said. "We won't take away from its impact, we'll add to it instead.

"We'll work it out differently for next time."

Mayor Richard Daley's Press Secretary was unable to be reached for comment at press time.

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