

HB 2551 -- LEAVING THE SCENE OF AN ACCIDENT

SPONSOR: Reiboldt

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Civil and Criminal Proceedings by a vote of 8 to 0.

This bill specifies that the offense of leaving the scene of an accident is a class D felony in 2016, and a class C felony in 2017, if a death has occurred as a result of the accident.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that this bill would enhance the penalty for leaving the scene of an accident when a person is killed. A mother who had her son killed by a hit and run driver testified that the law was unable to adequately punish the driver who killed her son. The driver who killed her son did not immediately come forward; when he finally did, he claimed he thought he had hit a deer. The prosecutor advised that because there was no evidence to show the man was intoxicated or otherwise negligent, the only charge they could get him with was leaving the scene of an accident. She paid more in funeral costs than the court was able to fine the man that killed her son. The consequences for this hit and run are de minimis. Another mother testified that her son was hit by a truck and killed. Both mothers said they have since discovered that there are numerous instances in Missouri of individuals being killed in a hit and run, and the prosecutors being unable to bring appropriate charges. A third mother testified that her daughter was killed by a hit and run driver. A man testified that his brother was killed by a hit and run driver, and the man who hit his brother tried to burn the car to hide the evidence; the most they could charge him with was destruction of evidence and leaving the scene of an accident.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Reiboldt; Stacy Stevens; Jeanne Besaw; Georgie Bush; and Terry Ham.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.