

Legislative Analysis



MITCHEL A. KIEFER FOUNDATION FOR DISTRACTED DRIVER AWARENESS HIGHWAY

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Senate Bill 480 as reported from House committee
Sponsor: Sen. Michael Kowall
House Committee: Transportation and Infrastructure
Senate Committee: Transportation
Complete to 12-12-17

Analysis available at
<http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

(Enacted as Public Act 237 of 2017)

SUMMARY:

Senate Bill 480 would amend the Michigan Memorial Highway Act to name the portion of Highway I-96 beginning at mile marker 122 and extending west to mile marker 118 as the “Mitchel A. Kiefer Foundation for Distracted Driver Awareness Highway.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On September 19, 2016, Mitchel Kiefer, an 18-year-old freshman at Michigan State University, was killed when his car was struck from behind and forced across the freeway median into oncoming traffic on I-96 west of the Webberville exit. The driver of the vehicle that rear-ended his was, according to newspaper accounts, driving while distracted by a mobile phone.¹ The Kiefer Foundation was created to honor Mitchel Kiefer’s life and legacy. Its core mission is to end distracted driving, and the traffic deaths and injuries it inflicts, by raising awareness of the dangers of distracted driving; by supporting public policies to end distracted driving; and by supporting advances in, and implementation of, technology designed to end distracted driving. In 2017, the Kiefer Foundation helped the Michigan Department of Transportation to construct 1.7 miles of protective cable barrier along the I-96 median, to increase road safety by preventing vehicles from crossing the median and coming into the path of oncoming traffic. It has been suggested that a portion of I-96 be named for the foundation that was itself named for Mitchel Kiefer, to honor its work against distracted driving and toward the safety of Michigan roadways, to raise awareness among the public of distracted driving and its dangers, and to honor the memory and the legacy of Mitchel A. Kiefer.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Section 2 of the Memorial Highway Act indicates that the state transportation department shall provide for the erection of suitable markers indicating the name of the highway only “when sufficient private contributions are received to completely cover the cost of erecting and maintaining those markers.” As a result, the bill has no state or local fiscal impact.

¹ <https://www.freep.com/story/money/cars/general-motors/2017/08/28/mitchel-kiefer-i-96-highway-barrier-gm-executive-foundation/608284001/>

POSITIONS:

General Motors supports the bill. (12-12-17)

The Michigan Department of Transportation indicated no position on the bill. (12-5-17)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House Fiscal Agency staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.