

House of Representatives

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House Committees, Councils, and Appointments

Chair, Public Safety & Domestic Security Policy Committee
Vice Chair, Government Accountability Act Council
Criminal & Civil Justice Policy Council
Government Operations Appropriations Committee
Governmental Affairs Policy Committee
Joint Legislative Sunset Committee
Policy Council

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“Ought to be a Law” Student Bill Relating to Smoking in Cars with Children is Filed in Legislature

Tampa, FL – State Representative Kevin Ambler (R-Tampa) is proud to announce that the 2010 “Ought to be a Law” (OTBAL) student legislation, which is titled *Smoking in Vehicles with Minor Passengers*, was officially filed in the Florida House of Representatives last night (February 18). The next step in the process is for the bill to be referred to its various Committees and Councils in the Florida House.

House Bill 1141 provides that it is unlawful for any person to be smoking in a vehicle in this state if a minor under 16 years of age is also present in the vehicle. The violation is secondary in nature, and it will be an enhanced penalty, which will be an additional \$100 fine assessed to the traffic violation already received by the motorist.

Rep. Ambler commented that, “The medical evidence and scientific research warning us against the dangers of exposing children to secondhand smoke, specifically in confined spaces such as cars, is overwhelming. Operating a vehicle in the state of Florida is a privilege, and we feel we can take action to protect the health and safety of our youngest Floridians in a situation like this without overstepping the boundaries of government on the personal rights that we have as individuals.”

Bloomington Senior High School (Valrico, FL) students and OTBAL Student Legislation Delegation members, Rebekah Morffi and Aaron Santana, proposed the bill idea to Representative Ambler, Senator Crist, and other Representatives in the Florida House at the 6th Annual “Ought to be a Law” Student Town Hall. This year, the program has expanded to not only include Hillsborough County Public School students, but OTBAL also has program participation from Hillsborough County high school students who are homeschooled or are attending private or charter schools in the county, such as Brooks-De Bartolo Collegiate High School.

The “Ought to be a Law” Student Legislation Program began as one of the first programs of its kind in the United States in 2004, when Representative Ambler realized after visiting several area high schools, that high school students should be given a better outlet to make their original ideas for a better Florida a reality, and to be able to actively participate in the real legislative process. Different than mock programs, “Ought to be a Law” was created to offer students the chance for their drafted bill idea to become an actual law. In the 2007 legislative session, the “Ought to be a Law” program made history when House Bill 1161 titled, *The High School to Business Career Enhancement Act*, was passed unanimously in both the House and the Senate and was then signed by the Governor into law. Governor Charlie Crist said at the “Ought to be a Law” bill signing, that “it is the greatest civics lesson we can achieve”.

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