

By Representative Needelman

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to the placement of rip current  
 3           warning signs; creating s. 380.275, F.S.;  
 4           providing for a cooperative effort among state  
 5           agencies and local governments to plan for and  
 6           assist in the placement of rip current warning  
 7           signs; providing that the Department of  
 8           Community Affairs shall direct and coordinate  
 9           the program; requiring the development of a  
 10          uniform rip current warning sign; authorizing  
 11          the department to coordinate the distribution  
 12          and erection of rip current warning signs;  
 13          providing for rules; limiting the liability of  
 14          participating governmental entities; providing  
 15          an effective date.

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 17 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 19           Section 1. Section 380.275, Florida Statutes, is  
 20           created to read:

21                   380.275 Beaches and coastal areas; posting of rip  
 22                   current warning signs.--

23                   (1) It is the intent of the Legislature that a  
 24                   cooperative effort among state agencies and local governments  
 25                   be developed to plan for and assist in the placement of rip  
 26                   current warning signs along the public beaches and coastal  
 27                   areas of the state. A rip current is a strong surface current  
 28                   of water flowing out past the surf zone, which can pull even  
 29                   the strongest swimmer into deeper water. Rip currents pose a  
 30                   significant danger of drowning to tourists and the general  
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1 public, and it is therefore important to inform the public to  
2 be cautious in coastal areas where rip currents can occur.

3 (2) The Department of Community Affairs, through the  
4 Florida Coastal Management Program, shall direct and  
5 coordinate the rip current warning sign program, which shall  
6 be a program to encourage the placement of rip current warning  
7 signs in areas that may pose a significant risk to the public  
8 as a result of rip currents. Signs may be located where the  
9 public has established an access way to a beach or coastal  
10 area.

11 (3) The department shall develop a uniform rip current  
12 warning sign for use at any public beach or along any coastal  
13 area where there may be a significant threat to the public as  
14 a result of rip currents, to be placed, insofar as is  
15 practicable, wherever the public has established access ways  
16 to the beach.

17 (4) The department is authorized, within the limits of  
18 appropriations available to it for such purposes, to establish  
19 and operate a program to encourage the placement of rip  
20 current warning signs in areas where the public has  
21 established an access way to a beach or coastal area that may  
22 be subject to a significant threat of dangerous rip currents  
23 and therefore may pose a hazard to the public. The department  
24 shall also coordinate with the local governing body the  
25 distribution and erection of rip current warning signs,  
26 whenever there is a request for such assistance.

27 (5) The department may adopt rules necessary to  
28 administer this section.

29 (6) The state, state agencies, local governments, and  
30 local government agencies may not be held liable for any  
31 injury caused by the placement or maintenance of rip current

1 warning signs or the failure to install or maintain rip  
2 current signs as provided by this section.

3 Section 2. This act shall take effect October 1, 2002.

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6 SENATE SUMMARY

7 Provides for a cooperative effort among state agencies  
8 and local governments to plan for and assist in the  
9 placement of rip current warning signs, under the  
10 direction of the Department of Community Affairs.  
11 Requires the development of a uniform rip current warning  
12 sign and authorizes the department to coordinate the  
13 distribution and erection of such signs. Limits the  
14 liability of participating governmental entities.  
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