

By Senator Joyner

18-00068-11

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1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act for the relief of Laura D. Strazza; providing
3 an appropriation to compensate her for injuries she
4 sustained as a result of the negligence of an employee
5 of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
6 Services; providing a limitation on the payment of
7 fees and costs; providing an effective date.

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9 WHEREAS, on April 25, 1996, Laura D. Strazza was riding as
10 a passenger in a motor vehicle on U.S. 1 in Juno Beach, Palm
11 Beach County, and

12 WHEREAS, an employee of the Department of Agriculture and
13 Consumer Services, Division of Forestry, was operating, on and
14 next to that highway, a large transport truck that collided with
15 the motor vehicle in which Laura D. Strazza was a passenger, and

16 WHEREAS, as a consequence of this motor vehicle crash,
17 Laura D. Strazza sustained multiple grievous injuries such that
18 she has been unable to work, has undergone surgical procedures,
19 and needs to undergo future surgical procedures, and

20 WHEREAS, a legal action was brought by Laura Strazza, a
21 single woman, against the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
22 Services, and

23 WHEREAS, on July 13, 1999, a jury rendered a verdict in
24 favor of Laura D. Strazza, finding that the Department of
25 Agriculture and Consumer Services was partly negligent in
26 causing a motor vehicle crash between the vehicle in which Ms.
27 Strazza was riding as a passenger and the department's transport
28 truck, and

29 WHEREAS, the jury rendered damages in the amount of

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30 \$1,464,000, and, after reduction for collateral sources and
31 comparative negligence of the driver of the vehicle in which Ms.
32 Strazza was riding, a Final Judgment in the amount of \$944,829
33 and a Cost Judgment in the amount of \$32,490.62, both bearing
34 interest at the statutory rate of 10 percent per year, were
35 entered against the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
36 Services, and

37 WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
38 Services has paid Laura Strazza \$100,000, the maximum amount
39 allowable under s. 768.28, Florida Statutes, and the remainder
40 owed under the judgment will be \$877,319.62, plus \$5,002.60 in
41 additional costs, for a total amount of \$882,322.22, NOW,
42 THEREFORE,

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

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46 Section 1. The facts stated in the preamble to this act are
47 found and declared to be true.

48 Section 2. The sum of \$882,322.22 is appropriated from the
49 General Revenue Fund to the Department of Agriculture and
50 Consumer Services for the relief of Laura Strazza for injuries
51 and damages sustained.

52 Section 3. The Chief Financial Officer is directed to draw
53 a warrant in favor of Laura Strazza in the amount of \$882,322.22
54 upon funds of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer
55 Services in the State Treasury, and the Chief Financial Officer
56 is directed to pay the same out of such funds in the State
57 Treasury.

58 Section 4. The amount paid by the Department of Agriculture

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59 and Consumer Services pursuant to s. 768.28, Florida Statutes,
60 and the amount paid pursuant to this act are intended to provide
61 the sole compensation for all present and future claims arising
62 out of the factual situation described in this act which
63 resulted in injuries to Laura D. Strazza. The total amount paid
64 for attorney's fees, lobbying fees, costs, and other similar
65 expenses relating to this claim may not exceed 25 percent of the
66 amount awarded under this act.

67 Section 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.