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Carolina squats a step closer to being outlawed on SC roads as bipartisan support mounts

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SC state Rep. Shannon Erickson, R-Beaufort, holds a photos of a low-riding truck commonly known as “Carolina squats” during a March 28, 2023 Education and Public Works committee meeting. ADAM BENSON *The Sun News*

Lawmakers in both chambers of South Carolina's General Assembly are coalescing around a push to ban so-called "Carolina squat" trucks that ride low to the ground and block driver sight lines.

An effort to outlaw the vehicles that frequently scrape along Myrtle Beach's Ocean Boulevard — one of them was involved in a June 2021 fatality — is backed not only by the city's top police officer, but the S.C. Police Chiefs Association and State Department of Public Safety.

"It's not safe. We already had a person run over in Myrtle Beach, there's going to be more coming," association executive director JJ Jones told a House subcommittee March 28.

He was one of four people who spoke in favor of the ban. There was nobody who testified in opposition.

Hours later, the Education and Public Works Committee unanimously [backed a measure](#) restricting a vehicle's back-to-front height difference to four inches — with fines of between \$100 and \$300 for violators. Chronic offenders could even have their license revoked.

South Carolina's [largest motorcyclists' rights group](#), ABATE, is also seeking a squat truck ban.

"We're trying to use the roads to do Bike Week or go to work or whatever and we have to think about all these hazards out there, and now we've got these man made hazards," Ralph Bell Jr., the group's legislative liaison, said. "Whether people like or not, we have to take on a harder stance because of the safety issues on our roads. We all have to be responsible for others when we get in a vehicle."

The proposal mirrors one that moved easily through the Senate in February, signaling bipartisan support to make South Carolina the third state where squat trucks would be illegal on public roads — joining North Carolina and Virginia.

Vehicles with skewed bumpers create safety hazards including large blind spots, braking difficulties and can even make air bags fail to deploy because their sensor is not aimed at a contact point.

Lawmakers hope quick floor votes will get a proposed ban on Gov. Henry McMaster's desk within weeks.

Myrtle Beach Police chief Amy Prock was in Columbia March 28 to push for the legislation, joined by Cpl. George Johnson who specializes in traffic analysis and accident reconstruction.

"The progress and support of this bill is a a clear message to our community and to the state that the safety of everyone is important and continues to be on our roadways," Prock told lawmakers.

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