

By Senator Atwater

25-00141-08

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1 A bill to be entitled

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

8
9 WHEREAS, on April 25, 1996, Laura D. Strazza was riding as a
10 passenger in a motor vehicle on U.S. 1 in Juno Beach, Palm Beach
11 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, Laura
17 D. Strazza sustained multiple grievous injuries such that she has
18 been unable to work, has undergone surgical procedures, and needs
19 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 causing
26 a motor vehicle crash between the vehicle in which Ms. Strazza
27 was riding as a passenger and the department's transport truck,
28 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 Services
38 has paid Laura Strazza \$100,000, the maximum amount allowable
39 under s. 768.28, Florida Statutes, and the remainder owed under
40 the judgment will be \$877,319.62, plus \$5,002.60 in additional
41 costs, for a total amount of \$882,322.22, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

44

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

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

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

57 Section 4. This award is intended to provide the sole
58 compensation for all present and future claims arising out of the

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59 factual situation described in this act which resulted in
60 injuries to Laura D. Strazza. The total amount paid for
61 attorney's fees, lobbying fees, costs, and other similar expenses
62 relating to this claim may not exceed 25 percent of the amount
63 awarded under this act.

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