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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Senator Baddour Votes for Regulation of ATV Use in Massachusetts**

*Senate seeks to increase safe practices; establish fines for ATV misuse*

(Boston, MA) – Senator Steven A. Baddour (D-Methuen) voted on Tuesday to expand regulations for operators of all-terrain vehicles in Massachusetts. This bill will require all ATVs and snow vehicles to be registered by September 1, 2008 and enforce strict age requirements in the use of these vehicles.

Senate President Therese Murray (D-Plymouth) said the bill will impose regulations that are necessary to keep ATV users safe and make certain that negligent users are held accountable for their actions.

“It is our obligation to make sure that unlawful use of snowmobiles and recreation vehicles is not a threat to public safety,” the Senate President said. “This bill will lessen unlawful ATV practices that harm our children and unnecessarily damage our environment.”

In just the past two weeks, four children under the age of 16 have been admitted to Massachusetts hospitals after ATV accidents.

“This legislation, passed by the Senate, will undoubtedly save the lives of many children and stem the tide of the preventable brain injuries and paralysis that have become commonplace in

the trauma centers of this Commonwealth,” said Dr. Peter T. Masiakos, a trauma surgeon at Massachusetts General Hospital.

In 2007, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation created an Off-Highway Vehicle Working Group to identify strategies and solutions to address the growing concerns regarding the illegal and unsafe use of snowmobiles and recreation vehicles. Much of this bill, which also creates a new state off-highway vehicle advisory committee to address ongoing concerns, stems from their work.

“This bill targets the unlawful use of snow and recreation vehicles through a comprehensive approach – mandatory safety training, strict age and engine size restrictions for juvenile use, and the creation of new fines and penalties for those who choose to operate these machines without regard for public safety,” said Senator Steven A. Baddour (D-Methuen), Senate Chairman of the Joint Committee on Transportation. “Riders who misuse these vehicles will now be held accountable for their actions.”

Regarding age regulations, this legislation requires that owners of ATVs who allow individuals under the age of 18 to use their vehicles be held accountable for any damage or injuries.

Further provisions of the bill include:

- Bans the use of ATVs by anyone under the age of 14 and limits the engine size of ATVs for children between the ages of 14 and 16.
- Owners of ATVs under the age of 18 must successfully complete a recreation vehicle safety and responsibility course before operating their vehicle.
- Creates new categories of violations and strengthens the penalties for existing ones.
- Requires the use of a helmet for all operators of an ATV.

The illegal use of recreation vehicles extends beyond public safety and health concerns. Each year, millions of dollars in damage is done to the environment as a result of illegal ATV use. This legislation will prohibit specific uses of ATV vehicles that harm public or private property, wildlife, deer or crops. It also increases fines for trespassing, a frequent problem in rural settings. The bill will also eliminate the operation of these vehicles in reforested or planted areas.

This bill will now go to the House of Representatives.

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