

STORAGE NAME: h0881.cla  
DATE: March 13, 2001

Florida House of Representatives  
Committee on Claims  
Summary Claim Bill Report

Bill #: HB 881  
Sponsor: Representative Lee  
Companion Bill: SB 76 by Senator Campbell  
Special Master: Stephanie Birtman, Esq.

**A. Basic Information:**

1. **Claimants:** Margaret Helm
2. **Respondent:** Martin County
3. **Amount Requested:** \$2,250,000
4. **Type of Claim:** Equitable – based on a settlement agreement.
5. **Respondent's Position:** None.
6. **Collateral Sources:** \$10,000 from car owner's insurance; \$10,000 from claimant's insurance, less \$2,000 deductible.
7. **Prior Legislative History:** None.

**B. Procedural Summary:** The claimant filed a lawsuit against Martin County for the negligent acts of volunteer firefighters who responded to an accident on March 21, 1999. Prior to trial, the parties reached a settlement agreement, wherein the County has already paid \$100,000 pursuant to the sovereign immunity cap, and has agreed to pay \$2,250,000, of which \$1,750,000 shall be paid to the claimant and the remaining \$500,000 will be used to purchase an annuity payable to the claimant.

**C. Facts of Case:** Margaret Helm, a 43 year old woman, stopped to render assistance to victims of an accident between a car and an intoxicated bicyclist. While rendering assistance to the driver of the car, Ms. Helm was seated on the ground behind the vehicle. Volunteer firefighters mistakenly put the car in reverse and ran over Ms. Helm. As a result of the accident, Ms. Helm suffered a fractured spine, punctured lung, and various fractures. She has a rod in her back, a neurogenic bowel and bladder, and is wheelchair bound. Ms. Helm currently works part time for Goodwill Industries, and runs a support group for victims and survivors of spinal cord injuries.

SM: \_\_\_\_\_ SD: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Stephanie O. Birtman Stephanie O. Birtman