



AP Photo

**CAN'T FORGET:** Liz Osina of Brock, whose daughter and three other girls were killed by a drunk driver this past December, wipes away a tear while on the Senate floor in Austin Wednesday, where legislation to lower the blood alcohol content was heard. In attendance, from left in the rear, were Lt. Gov. Rick Perry, Sen. Steve Ogden, R-College Station, Rep Scott Hochberg, D-Houston, and Rep. Phil King, R-Weatherford.

# Alcohol level bill supported by family, friends of victims

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AUSTIN — Heeding pleas from families of four high school girls killed in a crash with a man later charged with intoxication manslaughter, a Senate panel voted Wednesday to lower the legal alcohol limit for Texas drivers.

"If this law passes and it saves one life, and it saves one parent, one brother, one sister, one grandparent from what we've been through, then it's worth it," Pax Welch — who with the other parents is still mourning the teen-agers' loss — told the Senate Criminal Justice Committee before the vote.

Sixteen-year-old Whitney Welch was killed with Mandi McWhorter, 15, Staci Lee, 16, and Lacey Osina, 17, after authorities said a pickup crashed into their car Dec. 19.

The lawyer for the pickup driver, who was charged with four counts of intoxication manslaughter, has been reported as saying, "Our position is we're not guilty."

The girls' families and friends urged passage of tougher laws against drunken driving so others won't suffer the devastation they did in losing their loved ones — all top students, athletes and cheerleaders at Brock High School, west of Fort Worth.

They said the effort should start

with the bill by Sen. Mario Gallegos, D-Galena Park, to lower the legal intoxication limit for drivers from 0.10 percent to .08 percent blood alcohol content.

Among supporters of the measure, which next goes to the full Senate, are Gov. George W. Bush and Lt. Gov. Rick Perry.

Besides discouraging impaired people from getting behind the wheel, backers said the bill would raise public awareness of the problem of drunken driving.

"Maybe our daughters would be alive today if there was more public awareness out there and if we had stricter laws," said Lezlie McWhorter.