



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Jesse White's Legislation To Improve Teen Driver Laws Signed Into Law

Legislation initiated by Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White to improve teen driving laws with the aim of reducing traffic crashes and fatalities involving young drivers was signed into law today by Governor Rod Blagojevich.

Under the new law, sponsored by Sen. John Cullerton (D-Chicago) and Rep. John D'Amico (D-Chicago), Illinois' Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program that governs drivers up to the age of 21 will be one of the best in the nation. Several recent studies have shown that comprehensive GDL programs greatly reduce traffic crashes and fatalities involving teen drivers. The legislation is based on recommendations made by White's Teen Driver Safety Task Force, composed of legislators, traffic safety experts, law enforcement officials, educators, judges and victim advocates.

"This law will not only make Illinois' teen driver program one of the strongest in the nation, but more importantly, it will save lives," White said. "Over the last year I've worked hard with my Teen Driver Safety Task Force to create legislation that better prepares new teen drivers and helps to prevent vehicle crashes, the leading cause of death for young people."

Leading national traffic safety experts have lauded the legislation as one that will save lives. According to a study conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, this new law could reduce fatal traffic crashes involving 16-year-old drivers by 38 percent.

The law goes into effect January 1, 2008, and includes the following nine provisions:

- Extends the permit phase from three months to nine months. This proposal will give the novice driver more time to learn under the watchful eye of parents through a variety of weather conditions common throughout Illinois.
- Shifts the nighttime driving restriction from 11 p.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays and from Midnight to 11 p.m. on weekends for all drivers under the age of 18 and those who fail to graduate from the initial licensing phase.
 - The nighttime driving restriction includes exemptions for teens that are traveling to and from school activities and work.
 - The risk of fatal crashes involving 16 and 17-year-old drivers is three times higher from 10:00 p.m. to midnight than from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., according to a study by the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health.
- Doubles the period - from six months to 12 months - that restricts a new driver to a maximum of one unrelated teen passenger.

- The Johns Hopkins Study also concluded that the driver death rate for 16-year-old drivers rose sharply for each additional passenger in the vehicle. Based on studies and testimony, White's task force concluded that distractions from other teen passengers are one of the leading causes of traffic crashes involving 16-year-old drivers.
- Requires drivers under age 18 who are ticketed for traffic violations to appear before a judge with a parent or guardian to receive court supervision. This legislation also requires the attendance of traffic school as a requisite for court supervision for drivers under the age of 21. This ensures that the parent or guardian is fully aware of the minor's traffic violation and understands the requirements and ramifications of court supervision.
- Tickets the passengers age 15 to 20, in addition to the drivers, who violate the passenger restriction law. White's task force felt that a teenager's actions are often motivated by consequences or lack thereof. This proposal places responsibility on both the passengers and the driver to abide by the passenger limitation provision.
- Requires student drivers to complete a minimum six hours of actual, on-the-street driving with a certified driver education instructor. This proposal eliminates the provision that allows students in high school driver education classes to take a proficiency exam after completing just three hours of practice driving. In addition, it removes current exemptions that allow the use of driving simulators and driving ranges as a substitute for street driving with a certified driver education instructor. This provision takes effect July 1, 2008.
- Implements a true Graduated Driver Licensing system that requires new drivers to earn their way from one stage to the next. Under this proposal, once issued a learner's permit, a teen would be required to drive conviction-free for nine months before he or she would be eligible for a driver's license. The teen would then also have to drive conviction free for six months in addition to reaching age 18 before moving from the initial licensing phase to the full licensing phase.
 - Until graduating to the full licensing phase, these young drivers would be subject to the limitations of the initial phase that include the nighttime driving restriction and cell phone ban among others.
- Implements a stricter law in which the drivers' licenses of those under age 21 would be suspended for each additional conviction following a driver's initial suspension for two moving violations in a 24-month period. This provision puts young drivers on notice that once their drivers' licenses have been suspended, each additional conviction until they turn 21 will result in another suspension of their driving privileges.
- Establishes tough, new penalties - including license revocation and vehicle impoundment - for drivers who are involved in street racing. Street racing has become a deadly phenomenon that encourages drivers to race on city streets, highways and interstates. Harsh, no-nonsense penalties are needed to combat and punish this deadly, thrill-seeking behavior.

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