



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

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Gov. Blagojevich signs Secretary Jesse White initiative to protect teen drivers; Illinois teen driving law now among toughest in the nation

Law extends learner's permit time from three to nine months

CHICAGO- Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today joined Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White, state legislators and local teenagers at a Chicago public high school, to sign legislation initiated by Secretary White that makes Illinois teen driving laws among the toughest in the nation.

Senate Bill 172, known as Jesse White's Teen Driving Bill and sponsored by Sen. John Cullerton (D-Chicago) and Rep. John D'Amico (D-Chicago), is based on recommendations made by a Task Force assembled by Secretary of State Jesse White in response to a series of articles in the Chicago Tribune about the dangers faced by teen drivers.

"As the father of two young girls who will someday be getting behind the wheel for the first time, it gives me a lot of comfort to sign this bill. Driving takes practice and concentration – and the consequences of not being fully trained and prepared can be deadly," Gov. Blagojevich said during the bill signing event held today at Jones College Prep in Chicago's South Loop neighborhood. "I commend Secretary of State Jesse White for his leadership on this issue, and the task force for their hard work in developing recommendations that will save lives."

"This law will not only make Illinois' teen driver program one of the strongest in the nation, but more importantly, it will save lives," said Secretary of State Jesse White. "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."

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of fatalities among teenagers in the United States where nearly 1,000 16-year-old drivers are involved in fatal crashes annually. In Illinois, last year there

were 151 fatal crashes that involved young drivers between the ages of 16 and 19. A total of 37 of those fatalities took place in Cook County.

The Secretary of State's Task Force included representatives from the Illinois Department of Transportation's Division of Traffic Safety, legislators, police, judges, educators, victims' advocates and other traffic safety experts.

SB 172 tightens learner's permit and GDL requirements through the following:

- Extends learner's permit period from three to nine months.
- Extends nighttime curfews to drivers up to 17 years old (currently 16).
- Moves up the weekday curfew to 10 p.m. from 11 p.m. and to 11 p.m. from midnight on weekends. Exceptions are made if driving with an adult, to and from work or school, and emergencies.
- Doubles from six to 12 months the time during which a GDL driver, under the age of 18, may carry only one unrelated passenger under the age of 20, excluding siblings.
- Allows ticketing for all passengers age 15 to 20 for riding in the car driven by the new driver. (Currently only the driver is ticketed.)
- Requires student drivers to complete a full 6 hours of actual, on-the-street driving with a certified instructor. Currently up to 5 of the 6 hours may be substituted for other educational methods such as computer simulation.
- Requires that new drivers have 6 months violation free of driving with a GDL before the age of 18 before becoming eligible for an unrestricted GDL license. With the 9 permit months, that means 15 months violation free driving is required before becoming eligible for a full license.
- Establishes tough new sanctions for street racing and strengthens sanctions for repeat violations for any drivers under the age of 21.

"This legislation is about the safety of 16- and 17-year-old drivers throughout Illinois," said Rep. D'Amico. "By strengthening our GDL law, Illinois is setting an example that I think states throughout the country will follow. I believe that this legislation will save lives here in Illinois and any other state that follows our lead."

"Illinois has made very strong progress in increasing safety belt use and reducing traffic fatalities since Gov. Blagojevich signed the primary seat belt enforcement into law in 2003," said Acting IDOT Secretary Milt Sees. "But we have continued to see far too many tragic crashes involving teens. This legislation enacted today should enable us to save even more lives."

SB 172 becomes effective January 1, 2008, except for the provision requiring six hours of on-the-street driving, which takes effect July 1, 2008.